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Creative Thinking Skills and Entrepreneurship Development

Dr. A. Rajmani Singh*

Abstract

Creativity and entrepreneurship is undoubtedly the Holy Grail in the 21st century- hotly pursued and extremely elusive. Creativity and innovation are considered to be inseparable from entrepreneurship, which is in turn manifested in the act of starting up and running an enterprise. Pretorius, Millard and Kruger (2005) maintain that “creativity is clearly part and parcel of the entrepreneurial skills required to successfully start a venture”. This is why China, Korea, Thailand, Denmark and Japan etc. have included creativity as a major goal of their educational reform efforts. It may be one of the reasons why these countries have been investing heavily to develop entrepreneurship, foster innovations, and make their colleges and universities world class. The present study explores the ways in which start-up entrepreneurs are creative and innovative. Success of their business lies on the creativity and innovativeness. To examine the hypothesis, data were collected from selected new and active entrepreneurs who started enterprises in Imphal West district of Manipur by means of a combination of in-depth interviews and telephone questionnaires. Results indicate that the first generation entrepreneurs in this study display high levels of creativity and innovation and these are reflected in several ways. These entrepreneurs generate, develop and implement new ideas for their start-ups, foster a climate that is conducive to creativity and innovation, provide top-down support for creativity and novelty in their organisations, and offer innovative products and services through inventive methods of production and delivery.

Key Words

Creativity, Innovation, Entrepreneurship, first generation entrepreneur, MSMEs

Introduction

Creativity and innovation are considered to be overlapping constructs between two stages of the creative process; both are necessary for successful enterprise (Martins & Terblanche, 2003). Creativity can be defined as “the production of novel and useful ideas” (Amabile et al., 1996), while

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innovation refers to the implementation or “transformation of a new idea into a new product or service, or an improvement in organization or process” (Heye, 2006). By definition, creativity and innovation involve the creation of something new that “...is central to the entrepreneurial process” (Barringer & Ireland, 2006). Creativity and innovation are considered to be inseparable from entrepreneurship, which is in turn manifested in the act of starting up and running an enterprise. Pretorius, Millard and Kruger (2005) maintain that “creativity is clearly part and parcel of the entrepreneurial skills required to successfully start a venture”. Entrepreneurs and their start-ups are considered to be “important agents of innovation” (Bosma & Harding, 2007), not simply in terms of the products and services they provide, but also in terms of the technologies and processes that they utilise (Bosma & Harding; Watson et al., 1998). Entrepreneurs could be argued to be, by their very nature, the essence of creativity and innovation. Entrepreneurs implement creative ideas to introduce innovative products or services, or to deliver products or services in a new, more efficient, and hence innovative way. Innovation in new product development could include upgrading an existing product or developing a totally new concept to create an original and innovative product (Larsen & Lewis, 2007). This is also true for services and processes, thus innovation is recognised in the literature as ranging from the incremental to the radical. There is broad agreement that innovation should be present in all aspects of an organization and that it should be a mind-set or a way of life (Abraham & Knight, 2001; Kuczumarski, 1996). Innovation should permeate through the various elements of the organization’s business model in order to make it harder to be copied by competitors (Loewe & Dominiquini, 2006). Therefore, innovation is not only measured by the new products or services offered by an enterprise but also by new and more efficient ways of developing, producing or delivering products or services.

It is argued that creativity is not required solely in the domain of certain sectors or departments, or only in the development of new products or services, but is needed at every level in all type of organization. Creativity is seen as going beyond new products, new services and new and improved processes (Cook, 1998; Heye, 2006). Therefore if one can “better organize one’s day or write a report in a new or more effective way, then this is every bit a creative act” (Gurteen, 1998).

Objectives of the study

The present study is attempted to fulfil the following objectives:

- ◆ to determine whether life skills has direct or indirect impact on the Entrepreneurship Development
- ◆ to find out the impact of creative thinking skills in Entrepreneurship Development
- ◆ to examine the impact of creative thinking skills among the select micro enterprises in Imphal West district of Manipur

Methodology

This study explores ways in which first generation entrepreneurs in Imphal West district are creative and innovative. Data collection and analysis took place in two phases. Phase One utilised a qualitative method of data collection, while Phase Two made use of a quantitative method to substantiate the findings of the first phase of research. The data collected in Phase One was fully analysed before Phase Two was conducted, as the preliminary findings from the qualitative research were fed into the quantitative part of the study for further investigation.

For entrepreneurs to be included in this study their enterprises needed to meet the “new” and “active” criteria as described by Luger and Koo (2005). Enterprises which were set up in Imphal west district in the last five years were considered to satisfy the “new” criterion. The “active” criterion was satisfied if the micro enterprise employed at least one full-time employee (excluding the entrepreneur) and was engaged in commercial activity.

Phase One: Personal Interviews: In Phase One, in-depth personal interviews were carried out with 10 micro entrepreneurs. Respondents were identified through the information supplied by Micro Small Medium Enterprise (MSMEs), Industrial estate Takyel, Manipur through personal contacts. This first phase sought to provide insight into how entrepreneurs tap into their creativity and innovation to overcome the challenges they face starting up and running a new enterprise. In these circumstances, a qualitative approach was considered to be the most appropriate as it allowed in-depth exploration of the issues under investigation.

A tailor-made, semi-structured interview schedule that included the main questions, prompts and probes, was used to ensure coverage of key issues and to guide the interview process. The interview schedule, which was also translated into Manipuri, was rigorous enough to enable the identification of

patterns and trends, but was sufficiently flexible to allow the interviewer to follow emergent leads. Questions were open-ended and as non-leading and as unambiguous as possible. All interviews began with the respondents being asked to provide some details about themselves and their start-up. These opening questions were non-threatening ice-breakers to help to put the respondents at ease, build rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee and at the same time provide a wealth of information about the entrepreneur's background before moving onto a discussion on creativity and innovation.

Interviews were conducted in English or Manipuri language, depending on respondents' preference, and lasted around 30 minutes each. Gilmore *et al.* (2004) suggest that the understanding of entrepreneurial phenomena is enhanced when they are examined in their own natural context. Consequently, all interviews were carried out on the respondent's business site. Prior to analysis, each transcript was e-mailed as well as personally handed over to the respective respondent for a process of member validation, whereby they were asked to read through the document and verify that the information was reported truthfully and accurately, and to make amendments if necessary.

Phase Two: Survey Data

In Phase Two, respondents were also required to meet Luger and Koo's (2005) "new" and "active" criteria. Collection of data was carried out using purposive sampling. This led to the creation of a theoretically relevant sample which is deemed most appropriate in entrepreneurial research (Davidson, 2004).

Since the second phase of this study was quantitative in nature, it required a larger research sample than the first phase of the qualitative step. A sampling frame of "active" enterprises was compiled from the *Business Directory maintained* by the Department of MSMEs, Government of Manipur. Since enterprises appearing on these directories were publicly advertising their products or services, it could be safely deduced that they were involved in commercial activity. Those microenterprises registered during the last five years were considered to fit the "new" criterion and therefore included in this research sample, which also included the participants from the first phase of the research. The lengthy selection process yielded a sampling frame of 102 "new" and "active" enterprises. The entire sampling frame was contacted, out of which 62 Micro entrepreneurs agreed to participate in the study. This response rate of 60.78% is attributed to the hectic

schedule that is typical of many entrepreneurs of successful start-ups, which leaves them with little time to participate in research.

This second phase of data collection sought to substantiate the findings of the first phase of research, concerning how entrepreneurs tap into their creativity and innovation, and to explore ways in which this is reflected in their start-ups. Since research on creativity is typically carried out in large organizations, a tailor-made structured interview schedule was constructed for the purpose of the second phase of the study. The construction of this interview schedule was based on the main findings of Phase one and on a number of standardized instruments dealing with organizational creativity. These include Ekvall's *Creative Climate Questionnaire* (1987) and the Harvard Business Essentials' *Workplace Assessment Checklist* and the Advanced Practical Thinking Training Inc.'s *Innovation Index* (2001).

The final interview schedule contained items representing indicators of organizational creativity and innovation (product, service and process innovation), together with indicators of the psychological and physical environment of the start-ups under investigation. All the items in this part of the interview schedule were selected entirely on the basis of the literature reviewed and the instruments mentioned above. However, replies of the select entrepreneurs required simple 'yes' or 'no' answers.

The interview schedule also gathered general information about the respondents and their start-ups, including the industry sector they formed part of, the year when their enterprise was set up, the number of employees, and the entrepreneur's previous managerial and start-up experience. The data gathered from this part of the interview was later used to classify and profile respondents.

The survey interviews in Phase Two were all administered over telephone. This survey method was selected because of its non-intrusive nature, and because it was permitted by the relative simplicity of the research instrument (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996). Interviews were conducted in English or Manipuri during office hours or at such times as requested by respondents, and lasted approximately 10 to 15 minutes each. Answers were recorded on the interview schedule sheets which were then used by the author for further analysis and interpretation.

Results of the study

Out of the ten micro entrepreneurs who participated in the first phase of this study, four had started up their enterprise in 2009, two each in 2010 and

2011, one each in 2012 and 2013. Seven respondents were male and three were female. One respondent was aged 20 or under, four were aged between 21 and 30, four were aged between 31 and 40, and one was aged 41 or over. All respondents in Phase One had completed higher secondary level of education. Nine respondents had no previous start-up experience.

In Phase Two, telephone interviews were conducted with 62 micro entrepreneurs whose enterprise had been registered with the relevant authorities in the last five years. All start-ups in this research sample fell into the SME category as defined by the MSME Act 2006. Micro, Small and Medium enterprises together made up 100% ($n=62$) of the sample. This is comparable to the population of MSMEs in Manipur, where micro and small enterprises together account for 99.3% of all small scale industries set up in Manipur (Economic Survey, DOE&S Government of Manipur 2013-14). Out of the 62 respondents, 33.87% ($n=21$) were male and 66.13% ($n=41$) were female. It clearly shows the women's active participation in socio-economic development than their counterpart male in the state of Manipur. Respondents with managerial experience constituted 69.35% ($n=43$) of the sample, while those with experience starting up and running their own enterprise made up 30.65% ($n=19$) of the sample. In addition, enterprises falling part of handloom and handicrafts sector were highly represented in this phase of the research, constituting 29.03% ($n=18$) of the sample. The start-ups with the second highest frequency in the *sector* variable were those which offer food processing units, making up 19.35 ($n=12$) of the sample. This was followed by Jewellery manufacturing units accounting 14.52% ($n=9$). Other sectors, including manufacturing, assemble, retail, dry and cut flower unit, ICT, media and entertainment represent 23 micro enterprises making this a highly heterogeneous sample in terms of industry sector representation.

Phase One: Personal Interviews

The majority of entrepreneurs who participated in Phase One of this research claim that creativity and innovation play a crucial role in their start-up. Most of the entrepreneurs claimed that they are in some way creative and that their start-up is innovative as a result of their creativity. Sometimes they were able to specify ways in which they were creative and innovative; other times they were not. For example, one respondent described his "creative approach" in a new project "with a polythene used bags, he made rope which not only makes use of it as rope but also protecting environment from this non-degradable element". On the other hand, another respondent stated that he thinks he is "a bit creative" but does not know "how or what". He

thinks it must be “something to do with character”. Another entrepreneur claimed to have so many creative ideas that, were he has to live another seven lifetimes, it would still not be enough for him to put them all into action.

This concern about products or services that were so innovative that the market was not yet ready for them was voiced by three other respondents. Six other respondents stated that they introduced products or services that were new to the Imphal market but which had been available in other part of the country. For some, this innovation gave their start-up competitive advantage: “It was innovative for Manipur as well as for Imphal ... that was our competitive advantage, that we harnessed technology ... That made us save a lot of money which was also an advantage to our customer”.

Others voiced similar concerns regarding a market that was not ready for innovation: “it was new for Manipur, but not for other developed states of the country ... and first we started to make the market aware of our products which sort of the Manipur market was not ready yet for them”. Only one respondent admitted that his start-up simply offered “more of the same”. Yet even he claimed to be “always trying to design new products ... always trying to create something new”.

Creativity and innovation were deemed important for initial survival and for continued growth and success, with frequent references to initial innovative business ideas, a subsequent flow of new ideas for products or services, creative solutions to problems and innovative business processes. When asked about the main reason behind the success of his start-up, a respondent answered that he had “the idea which is unique so that helped a lot”. He also claimed that “the only way to keep ahead of the competition is to add new services, new ideas and also new expectations”. Having an innovative business idea was also cited by another respondent as being an important factor in the success of her start-up. Another respondent claimed that an innovative product helped to “penetrate the market” with a high quality product with a considerable price tag attached. He believed this was only possible because customers knew their product was not a “me too” product but something very different, and it was one of the major reasons why his start-up was successful. Another respondent believes that the only way to succeed is to stand out by being unique, different and original. “Having new ideas is extremely important”, he explained, “if you’re going to be like everyone else, you’re just going to fall in with the rest of the crowd”. He believes that his “creative approach” ensures that his products are always innovative and that this is one of the major reasons why he has been so successful.

Phase Two: Survey Data

The results from the qualitative research in Phase One were enriched with the quantitative research in Phase Two. This involved the computation of frequency counts and percentages for the items in part two of the telephone interview. Since these variables represent indicators of creativity and innovation, the statistics provide a general indication of entrepreneurial creativity and innovation and provide further depth in understanding how this is reflected in start-ups micro enterprise in Imphal west district of Manipur.

Out of the total, over half the owner-mangers in this study reported having launched products or services that were new to the Manipur market. This adds up to 16.7% ($n=15$) of the total sample launching products or services that were brand new at the time of start-up. The majority (89.5%) of these entrepreneurs reported that their new-to-market products or services had been a success. Most entrepreneurs (71.1%, $n=64$) reported that, as time passed, they added new products or services to their range, made improvements to existing products or services, and upgraded methods of production or delivery, all of which are indicators of product, service or process innovation.

The majority of start-ups in this study reportedly enjoy extensive generation and implementation of new ideas, both by the entrepreneurs and by employees. A considerable 94.4% ($n=85$) of entrepreneurs personally generate and develop ideas for their start-ups, and 83.3% ($n=75$) also encourage employees to come up with new ideas. Only two respondents had never implemented ideas proposed by their employees. Furthermore, only three of the entrepreneurs who did implement employees' ideas had witnessed no improvement in some aspect of their start-up.

Discussion

Findings from both phases of this study indicate high levels of entrepreneurial creativity and innovation among the micro entrepreneurs of Manipur. The entrepreneurs in this study generate, develop and implement new ideas for their start-ups, foster a climate that is conducive to creativity and innovation, and reap the benefits of such a climate by making good use of their employees' creative ideas. Furthermore, their creativity and innovation are reflected in the innovative products and services that they offer through innovative methods of production and delivery.

The personal interviews provided various examples of how these entrepreneurs employ their creative thinking skills to compensate for shortcomings,

overcome obstacles and create opportunities in their start-ups. The telephone interviews later demonstrated that nearly all entrepreneurs personally generate, develop and implement new ideas for their start-ups. Together, these findings offer substantial support for the literature that argues that creativity is central to and inseparable from the entrepreneurial process (Barringer & Ireland, 2006), and confirms that creative thinking is an essential entrepreneurial skill (Pretorius et al., 2005).

Creativity and innovation are contingent upon a supportive climate and a top-down approach (Kuczmarski, 1996; Thacker & Handscombe, 2003). A supportive climate is in turn strongly shaped by the attitudes and practices of entrepreneurs who play such a central role in all business activities. The fact that the entrepreneurs who participated in this study generate, develop and implement new ideas for their start-up makes them positive role models for their staff. Furthermore they provide top-down support and foster an organisational climate that is conducive to creativity and innovation, according to the criteria dictated by Martins and Terblanche (2003) and by the Harvard Business Essentials (2003).

The extensive encouragement and implementation of employees' ideas are strong elements of a supportive creative climate (Martins & Terblanche, 2003). The high percentage of respondents who claimed to practice an open-door policy indicates ease of communication across all organisational levels. Together with the reported high levels of trust, this increases the likelihood that employees would share their ideas with colleagues and superiors, and therefore enhances creativity and innovation (Martins & Terblanche, 2003).

In innovative products and services, it is worthwhile to note that several respondents in both phases of the study claimed that their products or services were not only new to the local market but were the first of their kind in the region. Furthermore a high percentage of entrepreneurs reportedly added products or services which were new to the market, or upgraded their existing products, services or methods of production or delivery as time elapsed. Although one may wonder whether these reportedly new-to-market products or services caused any sleepless nights to their competitors, or whether they were really only me-too products or trend-of-the-moment products (Kuczmarski, 1996), they may still be assumed to be indicative of some level of product, service and process innovation respectively.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although this study was designed to address the research question as closely and accurately as possible, the research design and methodologies gave rise

to a number of inherent limitations which could not be eliminated. Other limitations arose at a later stage of the study from circumstances that were beyond the researchers' control. The fact that the research sample was made up exclusively of entrepreneurs raised the possibility of biased responses where indicators of creativity and innovation were concerned. The respondents may have refrained from providing information which they felt would reflect negatively on themselves or their start-up. One should bear in mind that many entrepreneurs take great pride in their start-up, and some even refer to it as if it were their child. It is likely that, just as a parent would want to mask his/her child's shortcomings to strangers, entrepreneurs would be reluctant to admit the deficiencies of their start-up to third parties. Thus there is a possibility that they provided responses that they believed were socially desirable. There is also a likelihood that they replied truthfully, but their perception of the situation was somewhat distorted and biased. This would mean that they inadvertently provided misguided views of their start-ups' indicators of creativity and innovation.

Nevertheless, it would be beneficial for future research into creativity and innovation in start-ups to include triangulation of methods to obtain a holistic picture and reduce as much as possible that bias resulting from perceptual data that is bound to influence results.

Conclusion

The entrepreneurs in this study are highly creative and their start-ups innovative. These entrepreneurs foster creative climates, provide top-down support for creativity and innovation, and offer innovative products and services through innovative methods of production and delivery. This confirms the central role of creativity and innovation to the entrepreneurial process (Barringer & Ireland, 2006). Thus, it implies that the days are gone, now micro entrepreneurs of Manipur have migrated from the traditional role of traders or so called imitative entrepreneurs to the more creative and innovative entrepreneurs. This augurs well if Manipuri entrepreneurs are to meet the challenges of competing on a regional, national and global market, as this demands enterprises to reinvent themselves, which in turn requires creativity and innovation. Imparting more Life Skills Education training to young boys and girls from their adolescence stage will make them a future successful entrepreneur of the state, region and country.

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Assessment of Problem Solving Skills in Biological Sciences amongst XIth Standard CBSE Students of Mysore

Geetha G Nair*

Abstract

Problem-solving enables us to deal and manage constructively with problems in our lives (WHO, 1994; 1997). Two important sub-skills required for these in Science are analytical thinking and self-knowledge. XIth Standard CBSE students were administered Life Skill Development Exercises in Biological Science topics of epithelial tissues and ploidy levels taught in Biology (NCERT, 2006). Percentage achievement scores were determined and correlated with percentile IQ values obtained through the administration of Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices (Raven, 1938). The students were rated poor in self-knowledge and as average to very good in analytical thinking. Remedial measures have been suggested.

Key Words

Problem solving, analytical thinking, self-knowledge, life skill development, biological sciences

Introduction

Problem-solving enables us to deal and manage constructively with problems in our lives. Significant problems that are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical strains (WHO, 1994, 1997). Problem solving is the ability to weigh the plusses and minuses of a given problem situation and arrive at various strategies to unravel the problem. It requires the ability to use the mental talents of analytical ability, synthetic ability, divergent thinking and interpolate these mental skills with knowledge at hand to arrive at various solutions to a problem. Problem solving is an important generic life skill. Life skills are defined as psycho-social competencies of an individual to deal with the situations we come across in our day to day lives. Problem solving has a pioneering role in dealing with day-to-day life situations. This generic skill comprises the following sub-

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skills (WHO, 1994, 1997; Murthy, 2005)

Self-knowledge is the ability to understand and learn about one's own capacities, emotionality and actions in dealing with problems in various situations of life.

Positive attitude is the ability of being hopeful and confident of approaching the problems in life.

Divergent thinking is the ability to think in multiple ways, views and manage a problem from different perspectives.

Objectivity is the ability to view one's own problem from a third person's perspective as they are.

Rationality is the ability to solve problems based on reasons and logic than using crude methods of trial and error.

Logical thinking is the ability to understand and deal with the problem in a systematic and orderly fashion.

Analytical ability is the ability to break down and understand various aspects/components of the problem.

Synthetic ability is the ability to put together and understand various aspects of the problem.

Anticipation of consequences is the ability to infer/foresee the after effects of the problem and the possibilities of success/failure of the strategies used in management of the problem.

A comparison of the sub-skills of problem-solving and decision-making (WHO, 1994; Murthy, 2005) show that divergent thinking, logical thinking, creative thinking, knowledge of the situation, and positive attitude are the skills in which problem-solving is different from decision-making. Rest of the sub-skills overlap i.e. they are seen as components of the skills of problem solving and decision making.

Problem-solving as a life skill is universal in nature and has increasing importance in the life of an individual-be it academics, a profession/career/or the life of a common man. In academics, especially in Science, this generic life skill holds sway over the fields of mathematics, physics and chemistry-to enable the individual to grasp the meaning and concept of numbers, of physical concepts and theories and to measure the dimensions of molecules and atoms and their interactions. In Biology, problem solving helps one to understand and deduce the various phenomena in nature and come up with

solutions to environmental disasters and mismanagement. One eg. is the recent environmental holocaust of floods in Kashmir valley. What caused the floods? Could we have prevented the damage to life and property in time? Could we have taken cognisance of the impending disaster ahead of time through weather forecasts and other predictions and done something to prevent it? Could we have averted the disaster through problem solving?

CBSE(2010) has come up with a Teacher’s Manual on Life Skills which recommends and transacts the teaching of generic life skills. Problem-solving in day to day life situations has been elaborated here with examples. Here in this article the researcher is concerned with ‘teaching and assessment of life skills through the Biological skills especially the skill of problem-solving’. A bird’s eye view of the Teacher’s Manual brings to light that, since ages problem solving has made our lives better through persistence and determination which are in turn the two basic characteristics required for developing this skill. For e.g., Edison’s invention of the bulb and the gramophone, Graham Bell’s invention of the Morse code and the telephone, and the Wright Brothers and the invention of the airplane, i.e. lighting, telecommunication and travel by air have been possible because of the persistence and determination of the inventors. Four basic steps to problem-solving have been mentioned in the Manual

- ◆ definition of the problem
- ◆ the feelings generated by the problem and their identification
- ◆ courses of action to solve the problem
- ◆ planning and goal setting in small steps to solve the problem.

Activities for conflict management (inter-personal problems) and for developing problem-solving approach (puzzle games, untangling, role play to help friends, case studies, problem solving worksheets) have been elaborated upon. The problem-solving approach has been made more exacting and scientific through statement of the problem, hypothesis, experimentation, observation and conclusion.

Assessment of problem solving ability has been carried out through 20 worksheets and grading done based on ingenuity of solutions and the approach adopted by the students.

e.g.,	Creative approaches –more than 2 ways	A+
	Involved in problem resolution-more than one way	A
	Utilises one way to solve problem-makes an effort	B+

Has a solution but does not make an effort at Creativity	B
Lack of Expression-no problem-solving approach	C

The CBSE has evolved a problem solving assessment pattern based on 60 questions on language aptitude, quantitative reasoning and qualitative reasoning patterns. This comes in the form of a test booklet. It has no negative marking and for each correct response the candidate gets one mark. But how effective this has been in assessing the problem solving ability and in improving it is not certain. Problem Solving Assessment (PSA) is a special test designed by CBSE for students in class-9 and class-11 aiming to infuse generic and higher order thinking skills among the school students. The test of Problem Solving Assessment is designed to assess and improve skills like creative thinking, decision-making, critical thinking and communication abilities that lead to achievement of life skills in totality and to success in real life situations. The PSA test items aim to assess student's ability to process, interpret and use information rather than assessing their prior subject matter knowledge. It is an effort to take the students out of bookish knowledge and make them able to handle real life challenges.

Methodology

An effort has been made in the present work to teach and assess problem-solving through Biological Sciences chapters in XIth Standard (NCERT,2006) on epithelial tissues and ploidy levels. Spade work on teaching problem-solving was carried out through definite modules in Biology (Nair,2011,2013). The existing module in Biology (Nair,2013) has been revised and has now a format consisting of Unit, Topic, Overview, Objectives, Expected Outcomes, Associate Issues, Life Skills involved, Sub-skills, Niche' or anchor points for development of life skills, Operational definitions of life skills, Descriptive indicators for life skills (&Sub-skills), Interventions for development of Life Skills, Assessment/Evaluation of Life Skills and Life Skills Development exercises (in the form of activities etc.). The existing modules were extended and modified with Operational definitions of life skills, descriptive indicators for life skills, process skills involved, Niche' for development of life skills, Life Skill Interventions, Assessment and Life Skill Development exercises.

The chapters on epithelial tissues and ploidy levels (NCERT, 2006) were taught to the XIth Standard students utilizing an entire teaching slot of 45 minutes each during the first session. After exposing the students to all the required facts and information on these topics, a second session of 45 minutes was conducted using Life Skills Interventions - experiential methods, brain-storming methods to teach the life skill of problem solving and acquaint them with related problems pertaining to these topics of Science. A third session of 25

minutes each was carried out to test the development of life skills of problem solving through academic output. Five life skills development activities or questions were framed (for 5 marks each) and evaluated for a total of 25 marks. Weightage given to each question was split up based on the ability to explain, justify and come to conclusions. Under problem solving, analytical ability and self-knowledge were taken into consideration and were developed through life skill interventions and assessed. The sample taken for study consisted of 39 XI Standard students. They ranged in age from 15-17 years. An IQ test was administered to this sample using Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices and percentile IQ calculated using Raven's Manual (2000,2004) for the purpose of correlating IQ with problem solving ability in terms of achievement scores in each of the sub-skills of analytical ability and self-knowledge.

Result

Quantitative results of the study shows that out of 39 students who attempted the Life Skill Development exercises, four of them were absent for the self-knowledge development exercises. The 39 students were in the age group of 15-17 years. After assessment of the exercises, the achievement scores (out of 25) were calculated as percentage values for the sub-skills viz., analytical thinking and self-knowledge. An aggregate value of these sub-skills was considered in terms of %age values once again to represent the problem-solving ability of the students. The students were graded based on their achievement scores as follows: 20-40%- poor, 40-60%—good, 60-80%—very good, and 80% and above —as excellent.

Statistical Analysis and Interpretations

Correlation with analytical thinking

Analytical thinking and total problem solving scores showed a correlation of 0.690 and is therefore not significant. Analytical thinking scores with SPMT scores and IQ percentile showed correlation of 0.073 and 0.111 respectively and are therefore not significant. Percentage analytical thinking with analytical thinking and percentage self-knowledge, SPMT Scores and IQ percentile show correlation of 0.074, 0.3 and 0.329 respectively and are therefore not significant. Percentage analytical thinking scores and total problem solving scores have a correlation of 0.161 and are therefore not significant. Percent analytical thinking scores and SPMT raw Scores and IQ percentile scores show a correlation of 0.278 and 0.225 respectively and are therefore not significant.

Correlation with Self-knowledge

Self-knowledge and analytical thinking scores show a high correlation of 0.005 and are therefore significant. Self-knowledge percent scores and analytical thinking scores have a correlation of 0.360 and are therefore not significant. Self-knowledge percent scores and problem solving scores and total problem solving have a correlation of 0.666 and are therefore not significant. Self-knowledge percent scores and SPMT scores and IQ percentiles show a correlation of 0.143 and 0.080 respectively and are therefore not significant. Problem solving scores, analytical thinking scores and percent self-knowledge scores show a correlation of 0.690, 0.161 and 0.666 respectively and are therefore not significant.

Table - 1

Statistical analysis of Problem solving and component sub skills in XI Standard students of CBSE School in Mysore

Correlations		AT	ATP	SKP	total	PS	Raw scores	IQ P
AT	Pearson Correlation	1	-.074	.005	.690**	.690**	.073	.111
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.653	.978	.000	.000	.663	.506
	N	39	39	34	39	39	38	38
ATP	Pearson Correlation	-.074	1	.360*	.161	.161	.278	.225
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.653		.036	.329	.329	.091	.174
	N	39	39	34	39	39	38	38
SKP	Pearson Correlation	.005	.360*	1	.666**	.666**	.143	.080
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.978	.036		.000	.000	.426	.656
	N	34	34	34	34	34	33	33
total	Pearson Correlation	.690**	.161	.666**	1	1.000**	.217	.252
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.329	.000		.000	.190	.127
	N	39	39	34	39	39	38	38
PS	Pearson Correlation	.690**	.161	.666**	1.000**	1	.217	.252
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.329	.000	.000		.190	.127
	N	39	39	34	39	39	38	38
Rawscores	Pearson Correlation	.073	.278	.143	.217	.217	1	.913**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.663	.091	.426	.190	.190		.000
	N	38	38	33	38	38	38	38
IQ P	Pearson Correlation	.111	.225	.080	.252	.252	.913**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.506	.174	.656	.127	.127	.000	
	N	38	38	33	38	38	38	38
**.		Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						
*.		Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						

AT- Analytical thinking; SK- Self-knowledge; PS- Problem Solving; P- Percentile

Correlation with SPMT Raw Scores

SPMT Raw Scores and IQ percentile scores show a correlation of **0.217** and 0.252 and are therefore not significant. SPMT Raw scores and analytical thinking, percent analytical thinking and percent self-knowledge scores show a correlation of 0.073, 0.278 and 0.143 respectively and are therefore not significant. SPMT Raw scores and problem solving scores show a correlation of 0.217 and are therefore not significant. SPMT Raw Scores and IQ percentile show a correlation of 0.913 and are therefore not significant.

Correlation with problem solving

Analytical thinking scores and problem solving scores show a correlation of 0.690 and are therefore not significant. Percent analytical thinking scores and Problem solving scores show a correlation of 0.161 and are therefore not significant. Percent self-knowledge and problem solving show a correlation of 0.666 and are therefore not significant. The total score of Analytical thinking scores and self-knowledge and problem solving scores show a correlation of 1 and are therefore not significant. SPMT Raw scores and problem-solving scores show a correlation of 0.217 and are therefore not significant. IQ percent scores and Problem solving show a correlation of 0.252 and are therefore not significant.

The achievement scores for analytical thinking ranged from 20-68% and in self-knowledge from 4-38%. The students were poor to very good in analytical thinking but were poor in self-knowledge. Lack of self-knowledge i.e. their capacities and emotional ties would hamper problem solving abilities. Only two students showed remarkably good analytical abilities in the range of 64-68% and about half of the students(18/39) were poor in analytical ability. Half of the XIth Standard student populace(19/39) were good in analytical abilities(score 40-60%).

Almost all students came in the range of 20-40% in self-knowledge and therefore were poor in their awareness about themselves.

When problem-solving is taken as an aggregate of analytical thinking and self-knowledge, the students turned out to be poor(in the range of 20-40%) in this skill. A couple of students were good with 42% and 43% scores respectively.

Discussions

It is suggested that the problem-solving approach through activities, worksheets, role-plays etc. be systematically practised in the class-room in order to hone these skills in students. Also group discussions on matters pertaining to the school, discipline and administrative matters may be put across to the students during the prayer assemblies or during student's council

sessions and open house discussions held. Matters pertaining to social and national problems may be put up to students from time to time or these may be discussed at length to make them aware of their civic and social responsibilities. In Science, students may be encouraged to talk and discuss problems such as bio-ethics, bio-piracy, bio-medicine etc. through brain-storming sessions, role play, case studies etc. and solutions arrived at. Biology topics such as significance of changes in ploidy levels, importance of epithelial tissues, the skin and immunity may be put up for brain-storming sessions. These activities would promote analytical thinking and raise their awareness levels and these activities should form part of a routine day at school to inculcate problem solving in students.

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A New Perspective: Life Skills and Literature, with Reference to Khasi Oral Tradition

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Abstract

Life skills is an umbrella term that encompasses various skills and, as the term suggests, those skills help an individual's interaction with the immediate environment whether at personal or social level. The problem that arises now amongst students is that while there is a general awareness of the term, there seems to be a lack of comprehension regarding its meaning and application. This problem needs to be addressed especially because certain skills are necessary for managing day to day life. Education has taken upon itself the burden of equipping students—young adults, with such skills. A question that arises at this point is, can a formal introduction of life skills into the education system be the only means of inculcating such skills into the developing young adults? This paper will focus on how literature can hone life skills, that are needed in the day to day functioning of an individual. The method that the researcher intend to validate this argument is by offering a close textual reading of some of the literary texts that are included into the courses of the curriculum of schools in Shillong and that are part of the larger corpus of the oral literature (now transcribed into the written) of the Khasi community. Such texts will be used to elucidate how this community has long relied on literature, most specifically, oral literature, to help inculcate and promote life skills, be it at a thinking level, a social level or an emotional level and hence such a practice has been deemed indispensable to the development of the individuals of this community. The precedence of the oral culture over formal education, further gestures that life skills can be promoted not only at a formal level but at a personal level as well.

Keywords: Life skills, formal education, informal education, indigenous knowledge, ethics, culture, oral culture, tradition, folktales, Khasi community

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Introduction

Life skills is an umbrella term that encompasses various skills and, as the term suggests, it is these skills that help in an individual's interaction with the immediate environment whether at a personal level or at a social level. The World Health Organization (WHO) in 1993 defined life skills as, "the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (WHO 1993). Further Ruchi Smita in a brief article, "Essay on the Concept and Importance of Life Skill Education", articulates these "abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour" as "psycho-social and interpersonal skills" (Smita 2015). The problem that arises now amongst students is that while there is a general awareness of the term, there seem to be a lack of comprehension regarding its meaning and application, especially because words like "psycho-social" and "interpersonal skills" often intimidate students from trying to broach this concept. Education has taken upon itself the burden of introducing and equipping students—young adults, with such skills. However, a disparity can still be witnessed between the formally introduced concept of life skills in the sphere of education and the actual comprehension and applicability of the term amongst those students to whom this concept is ever so pertinent. A question that arises at this point then is, can a formal introduction of life skills into the education system be the only means of inculcating such skills among the young adults? Further life skills that are introduced formally in the education system are often at a general level; as such they tend to have an all-encompassing claim that often neglect the particular. At a grass-root level a particular individual needs certain life skills that are particular to the community, society and culture to which they belong, and the general, at such times, becomes limiting in its applicability.

Life Skills in Khasi Oral Tradition

It can be argued that cultures have often equipped their people with certain skills that pertain to an individual's needs even before the education system has included life skills into its rubric. In this regard the oral literature of the folk becomes integral in understanding how indigenous knowledge can enrich communities with a certain ethical and cultural framework that can contribute to an understanding of life skills. Within Khasi culture, the imparting of life skills amongst the young adults begins with *Ki Jingsngeng Tymmen* (The Ancestral Proverbs) via the mode of the oral. Solony Bareh notes,

In the Khasi context, while admitting the significant role that literacy is playing in changing the socio-cultural contours, orality cannot also be summarily

dismissed. Even in urban centers where formal systems of education are firmly in place, the oral discourse is relied upon for social intercourse. (Bareh 42)

It is interesting to note that the advent of the written script within the Khasi context has also led to the transcription of the oral into the written form. Literature that had earlier existed only in the oral form can now also be found in the written form. As such folk literature has also now found its way into the curriculum of formal education, thus proving its indispensability to Khasi culture. For instance, the MBoSE (Meghalaya Board of School Education) syllabus for Khasi (MIL), Standard VI includes the following:

- 1. KaPansngaitKsiar Ki Saw Aiom- H. Elias**
- 2. Na MihngiShaSepngi- H. Elias**
- 3. Ki Khanatang U Barim- H. Elias**
- 4. Hints on the Study of Khasi Language- Nissor Sing**
- 5. KaJingsnengTymmen Part I- R. S. Berry**

For the purpose of our paper, two texts, that is, Ki Khanatang U Barim (Ancestral Myths) and KaJingsnengTymmen Part I (Proverbs of the Elderly¹), will be taken into consideration to elucidate the relevance of the oral within formal education and, by implication, the relevance of the folk in imparting life skills to individuals of a particular community.

The study of elements of folklore requires for a contextual understanding of the texts concerned because, as Bareh points out, “information about that aspect [effectiveness of the text] can be obtained from the actual social situation” (Bareh 2011). The space of the hearth becomes an important arena where the spoken word is enacted to create the “social situation” which Bareh points out. The hearth transcends its physical dimensions and takes on a more symbolic meaning as it becomes a space where such knowledge is passed from one generation to the next in the form of wise-sayings and proverbs. Though this tradition is no longer strictly observed in our modern times, it nevertheless still holds significance at a more symbolic and cultural level and it is often evoked in households in the form of stories once told by ancestors to parents who would in turn refer to these stories as they teach their young ones about life. At a cultural dimension, this tradition can offer as a means to preserving the heritage of the Khasis.

However, with regards to the focus of this paper, it is necessary to emphasize that this tradition of telling stories and reciting proverbs around the hearth

¹Self-translated titles of both texts, for a better discernment of their contents for the readers.

has helped in inculcating manners, codes of conduct, etiquette and even a sense of morality to the young. In this sense, the space of the hearth is also a space of learning and educating young Khasis even without the presence of formal education. This practice therefore takes a symbolic meaning in the sense that the evocation of the hearth is representative of a practice that carries out these various functions of Khasi indigenous knowledge, serving as a reminder of a more rooted understanding of one's own culture. E. W. Dkhar points out, "Our culture and traditions, customs and manners of which we are proud of; even the religion and religious beliefs and concepts forged and passed on from father to son and down to [great-grandsons] was done by means of 'Around the Fire-Side' (Dkhar2010).

It is also significant to mention that folk literature takes upon itself this responsibility to educate in a manner that would allow for an easier consumption for the young and the old alike because of another function associated to it, that is, to entertain. As such, the educational space of the folk takes up the dimension of the performative, where, once again, the hearth, within the Khasi context, acts as the literal space for this performance. Khasi folk literature is often categorized under the forms of phawar (rhymed chanting), jingsnengtymmen (proverbs²), khanapateng (legends), khanatang (myths), purinam (fairytales), puriskam (fables), khanapharshi (parables) and parom³ (both long and short stories). As mentioned earlier, the advent of the written script has made most of these texts available in written form; however, because of their verbal character these texts are essentially authorless. Similarly, R. S. Berry and H. Elias who are often associated with the texts, KaJingsnengTymmen Part I, and Ki Khanatang U Barim respectively, should not be taken as authors of the texts but as scholars who were prudent enough to have put into writing the repository of generational knowledge to which we can now avail ourselves. A brief analysis of selected portions of these texts would show how these texts have been and can still be used to promote life skills within the community. It can also help to explain why formal education has also included these texts within its syllabus even today when the written has replaced the oral mode of instruction.

²The word *proverbs* here is being used as an umbrella term to avoid the awkward use of the terms "sayings/ teachings" of the wise elderly which encapsulate maxims, aphorisms, similes and so on.

³ The *parom* in its original usage was taken to denote stories. As pointed out by D. R. L. Nonglait in *Literary Criticism and Fiction in Khasi*, "The stories are called 'Parom' and are of many categories- the short ones are like anecdotes and short stories and the lengthy ones are like the novels." He further points out that the lengthy *parom* can take many days and weeks even, for its narration in the oral form. (30-31).

The functionality of Ki JingsnengTymmen is announced in the Forward of the text itself by R. S. Berry who says that, “proper manners are a way of life which an individual can wear as proudly as gold before man and before God. These, we should not forget...” (Berry 2007). Instructions given in this text encapsulate every sphere of social life, ranging from meal etiquette, conversation manners, mode of dressing, codes of conduct, demeanour for social acceptance, maintenance of cleanliness, interpersonal skills to relate with other individuals and rules and taboos involved in heterogeneous relationships.

Considering the vast area which life skills cover, it would be more efficient to look at an aspect of life skills which can be read alongside the literary text concerned. The pertinence of interpersonal skills in today’s youth beckons for a more succinct consideration. Thus taking this into account, sections of KiJingsnengTymmen I will be reproduced that would portray how this form of folk knowledge can help in imparting interpersonal skills to those who take the time to read them. In view of the all-important aspect of the spoken word in interpersonal relationships, KiJingsnengTymmen advices,

Do not accustom yourself with bad words,
People will sneer and point finger at you;
Do not abuse, curse or castigate,
For you will earn bad reputation;
Refrain from taking oaths and swearing,
For it is a taboo in front of God⁴. (Berry I/XXII)

For words of shame, conceal them,
Even if they ring true do not pronounce them;
Do not make a habit of gossiping
For this habit will unfavourably be rooted in you
Do not resort to sulky words or actions
For civility will be rendered weak⁵. (Berry I/XXIII)

Keeping in mind, the close knitted nature of Khasis, interpersonal skills are mandatory in maintaining relationships with kith and kin and in this manner kijingsnengtymmen also include teachings that pertain to maintaining healthy relationships through social visits, family life, heterogamous behaviour, to name a few. For instance, KiJingsnengTymmen reads the following,

When guests come and visit you at your home,
Give them a mat or a wooden stool to sit,

⁴Translation taken from Bareh, for details, see bibliography.

⁵Self-translated.

And when they are at ease in a while
Give them kwai and tympew^{6,7} (Berry I/XII)
Whenever occasion calls for a visit
Before you enter the house through the entrance;
Wipe your feet clean on the porch;
Precede your entry with a hail to the house;
Wait upon a word, upon the answer,
Then go forth to transact business or seek leisure⁸. (Berry I/XV)

In relation to heterosexual relationships, Khasis are very particular with the inquiry pertaining to the clan associations of the couple concerned for they consider it an unforgivable taboo for a couple to marry if they are from the same clan or sharing the same ancestral mother. Hence KiJingsnengTymmen warns,

Do not marry those which custom forbid,
For it is a sacrilege beyond compare;
Do not be intimate with those you should not,
For you may fall into temptations of the flesh;
For what may befall may be taboo,
For you would fall beyond redemption.⁹ (Berry I/XXX)

Such wise sayings populate the entire rubric of Khasi folk literature, and only a few of them have been penned down in KiJingsnengTymmenPart I and II. While the MBoSE curriculum has taken upon itself to include some of these proverbs via the introduction of KiJingsnengTymmen, this inclusion is often perceived as tokenistic for it does not allow for an in-depth analysis of the context of these proverbs and hence its role and centrality to teaching life-skills to students. Bareh rightly points out, “Proverbs are not part [or rather, no longer] of conscious teachings or learning but they play an important role in socialization and personality formation” (Bareh 2011). The functionality of such oral forms of educational transmission lies in the fact that they not only entertain but they are automatically received into our memory because of the inherent aspect of the verbal being repetitive and reiterative in nature.

⁶The relevance of the story of Kwai and Tympew (the betel-nut and the betel-leaf) will be discussed a little later.

⁷Self-translated.

⁸Translation taken from Bareh.

⁹Self-translated.

The other prescribed text that this paper will look at, Ki Khanatang U Barim, is also derived from the oral tradition and includes a collection of folktales that, like Ki Jingsneng Tymmen, have been passed down verbally from one generation to the next. A story that gains resonance in relation to interpersonal skills from this text is “U Kwai, U Tympew and U Dumasla”¹⁰. This is an extraordinary tale of friendship and loyalty. In a village called Rangjyrwit, there lived a man named Shing Raitong and his wife, Lak. They earned their living doing odd jobs and struggled to get just a handful of rice each day. Shing had a friend named Nik Mahajon who was a very rich merchant. Despite the obvious gap in their standards of living they were very good friends. Shing would often visit Nik’s house and whenever he visited, Nik would never let him leave empty-handed.

Shing wanted to return the favour and so he and his wife decided to forget their shame and invite Nik to their empty house. The couple was thrilled upon Nik’s arrival to their humble dwelling. They decided to prepare a meal for him but unfortunately there was not enough rice in the house to serve even a single person. Shing instructed his wife to borrow some rice from the neighbours. Lak made arduous efforts to acquire some rice for their honoured guest but returned empty-handed. When informed about it, Shing felt so disgraced that he declared that it is better to die than to let his beloved friend leave without so much as a meal to offer him. Shing took a knife and stabbed himself in the heart. Feeling helpless and wretched, his wife followed suit.

Nik Mahajon, on the other hand, left alone started feeling anxious and fidgety. He wanted to see for himself the cause of the delay so he enters the kitchen and there he finds on the ground the bleeding corpses of Shing and Lak. When he realizes the cause of their death, he too stabs himself with the same knife because he could not bear the thought that the poor couple had taken their own lives as a consequence of their inability to provide him with a meal. On that fateful night, a thief enters the open house to seek refuge. He falls asleep in a corner of the house where he hides himself from sight but only to wake up to discover the three corpses in the kitchen. He contemplates running away but discerns that he will suffer a fate far worse than death if he is charged with murder and therefore he also kills himself.

When the villagers came to know the reason behind their deaths, they prayed to God to provide them with food less expensive than rice to offer to guests

¹⁰“Death in a Hut” in *Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih’s*

so that others may not suffer the same fate. God answered their prayers by creating out of the four bodies, betel nut, betel leaf, lime and tobacco. Shing became the betel leaf and his wife, Lak, became the lime. The symbolic significance of their relationship is seen in the habit of how the lime is smeared on the betel leaf when eaten. Nik Mahajon turned into a betel nut, which is also eaten alongside the lime smeared betel leaf to symbolize their friendship, while the thief transformed into tobacco, which is to be stuffed into the crevices of the mouth, characteristic of the behaviour of a thief.

Sensational and commendable though the sentiments may have been, it reveals certain flaws in the thinking, reasoning and problem-solving abilities of the characters. The misfortune lies in the fact that Shing and Lak were both orphans without any clan relatives to counsel them. The tragic consequence could have been avoided if Shing had communicated his predicament with clan members who perhaps might have helped them out of their sorry state of affairs. Even Lak who was left alone to her own devices might have avoided the awful end if she had someone to advise her on the situation. This outcome only reaffirms the need for relationships that can act as light shedding mechanisms on situations that one finds impossible to come to terms with, such as pain, loss, failure and so on. The story might not have ended on a tragic note if Shing and Lak have tried to work out their problems logically instead of resorting to drastic measures. They lack the ability to think through various scenarios and work out constructive solutions. The resort to suicide exhibits problems of communication and proper decision-making abilities which persist especially today in the fast paced world of technology. People are becoming isolated, real-life communication is declining, actual relationships are decreasing and the end result of which might lead to dire consequences as exhibited by the concluding part of the tale, “U Kwai, U Tympew, and U Dumasla”. The significance of the thief, on the other hand, lies in his capacity to envision future consequences; his decision, although misleading and as defeating as the others’, was made after deep and thoughtful examination. He had weighed his options before jumping into conclusions.

Keeping in mind of what had been said earlier about the educational and moralistic approach of folktales within Khasi culture, it is also significant to mention here the moralistic value that this tale holds for Khasis. Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih points out, “Khasis invented a story for everything... to explain the inexplicable, to comprehend the incomprehensible, they always

found a story” (Nongkynrih 2007). The story of “U Kwai, U Tympewand U Dumasla” can also be looked as a story invented to explain the customary offering of betel nut and betel leaf smeared with a little lime when receiving guests. At the same time this tale acts as a advisory one for Khasis who follow this custom diligently lest they meet with a similar fate like Shing and Lak.

Conclusion

The social value of folklore, especially in its verbal form cannot be ignored. Based on the textual readings offered in this paper, it becomes evident that folk literature can act as an important medium in imparting life skills to today’s youth just as it has done so since time immemorial. Although the school curriculum of the MBoSE have tried in including the study of such forms of literature, what is perhaps needed is the revival of the folk, outside the realm of formal education in imparting life skills at a more grounded level of the family and of the society.

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Life Skills Development through the Study and Practice of Rajyoga

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Abstract

Rajyoga signifies the highest form of yoga; loving communion between the soul of an individual and Supreme Soul or the remembrance of the Supreme Soul by an individual soul (Brahma Kumaris, 1996). This union happens in the context of the deep spiritual knowledge about oneself, God, and the world we reside in. Moreover, translating the understanding (resulted out of churning over of knowledge) into practice in one's daily life is another very important dimension of Rajyoga. The bases of Rajyoga are reflected in its tenets such as soul consciousness – nature of soul; God consciousness – nature of God, ones relationship with God; law of karma and world drama. The paper demonstrated empirically the benefits people derived, more specifically, various skills and virtues that the Rajyoga help participants develop when they studied and practiced it for an extended period of time. Ten females and 05 males who have been practicing Rajyog for a varying period were enrolled in the study. The study used qualitative method of investigation. In-depth interviews were conducted to understand what transformations, if any, the participants had witnessed within themselves since they started the practice of Rajyoga. More specifically, the paper identified the values and life skills that the study and practice of Rajyoga helped to build up and how they contributed to the betterment of lives of these people.

Key words

Life skills, Rajyoga, Soul consciousness, God consciousness

Introduction

Of all different meanings of yoga, the yoga as a “union or link between the soul and the supreme soul” is what Rajyoga implies. This union with God is sought in the context of a deep knowledge regarding who we are; from where we come into being and where do we go after leaving the body. Answers to the questions that challenged human mind eternally such as who is God and what is our relationship with God, why there is grief, suffer-

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ing and pain and how can one overcome them also provide base of Rajyoga (Brahma Kumaris, 1996).

The ultimate aim and objective of Rajyoga is to empower the self with the divine qualities that lay dormant within, to open the door of wisdom through the knowledge and bring about transformation in self in such a way that self becomes the controller rather than the controlled one. Rajyoga Meditation is found to contribute to positive thinking and thereby increase self-satisfaction and happiness in one's life (Ramesh, Sathian, Sinu & Kiranmai, 2014). It also found to contribute significantly to the improvement in physiological cardio-respiratory functions. Long-term meditators were found to overcome negative attributes such as anger, mental stress, negative/waste thoughts and irritability (Sukhsohale, Phatak, Sukhsohale, Agrawal, 2012) and also unhealthy addictive behaviours (Patel, 2013)

The present study was conducted to delineate various life skills and virtues of Rajyoga (as taught at Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya) helped to develop in practitioners who studied and practiced its principles for an extended period.

Methodology

Tool: Semi-structured in-depth interview guide was used for the purpose of reaching participants' experiences related to Rajyoga. The tool explored various themes such as what brought participants to Rajyoga, how they studied and practiced it, how their life before Rajyoga was and what changes they experienced after and what life skills and values they developed due to study and practice of Rajyoga.

Sample: Total 15 individuals - 05 males and 10 females - practicing Rajyoga for a varying period of time (one year to 35 years) were enrolled for the study. They belonged to varied socio-economic, educational and occupational background. There were doctors, engineers, business people, salesmen, homemakers etc. Their age varied from 24 to 71years. They were having varied number of years' of experience in Rajyoga, that is, one to 35 years.

Individual interviews were audio taped for the purpose of accurate documentation and analysis. Transcription analysis was conducted in terms of word, phrases, sentences and paragraphs to be highlighted to identify units of meaning with recurrent themes and subthemes. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and qualitative content analysis. This involves breaking the narrative transcripts of interviews into categories of interest. Common themes were identified and explored.

Results and Discussion

The participants found the study and practice of Rajyoga not only beneficial for their day-to-day life but also spiritually elevating tremendously and transforming experience. It helped them develop positive personality qualities and interpersonal relationship skills. Being able to cope with stress and manage negative emotions were the other gains. More importantly, it changed the participants' philosophy and thereby their attitude towards self, others and life.

Table 1: Summary of Life skills developed from the Study and Practice of Rajyoga

	Broader Skills	Sub skills	No. & % of participants
I	Interpersonal Relationship Skills	Understand & empathize with people, accept & respect them, develop Good will and service towards others	15 = 100
		Develop virtues like exercising silence, tolerance and forgiveness.	10 = 66.67
		Communication skills	05 = 33.33
II	Management of Stress	General management of stress	10 = 66.67
		Reappraise events as manageable	05 = 33.33
		Consider oneself as instrument (Nimitta), witness (Sakshi) & trustee.	05 = 33.33
		Increase feeling of self-efficacy	08 = 53.33
III	Management of Negative Emotions/Experiences	Manage anger	12 = 80
		Manage fear	04 = 26.67
		Manage depression	05 = 33.33
		Develop Positive attitude	09 = 60
		Not brood over & put full stop to past	04 = 26.67
IV	Ability to Seek Divine Support	Develop different relationships with Supreme Soul	14 = 93.33
		Treat Supreme Soul as constant companion	
		Surrender one's issues to Supreme Soul	
		Treat Supreme Soul as the One who inspires us to act	

Interpersonal Relationship Skills

Practicing soul-consciousness is the core of Rajyoga. This involves identifying oneself as soul that intends the various actions and experiences and not as body, which acts as an instrument. It also means operating from the understanding that the real nature of the soul is independent of body and parameters related to body such as age (I am senior), gender (I am male),

socio-economic status (I am rich), occupation (I am a doctor) or community (I am Hindu). Soul-consciousness helps view others also as souls independent of body or body parameters. This knowledge about one's and others' true nature made possible for all the participants (15 = 100%) to understand people, empathize with them, accept them as they are and respect them. It also created within them the feeling of good will and service towards others as reflected in the quote of P9 - "we have to take all along with us". One of the participants narrate their experience in these words: Understand other people – which I could never do – I always felt it is their mistake – I have not done anything. Now it is not like that. Now I try to understand people. ... Since I came here (Rajyoga), I feel that just the way I was under stress; the same way they (other people) were also under stress (P13). Another participant opines that, I had a great conflict 4-5 years back with my daughter-in-law to the extent that I felt that we may not be able to stay together. Then I thought that she had come for a particular reason (in my life) and then I said let me 'let go' and let me accept her more. Today ... she is changed. Looking at my change ... Even she has started co-operating a lot (P7).

Rajyoga also contributed to enhancing of participants' relationship with people as they (10 = 66.67%) developed virtues like exercising silence, tolerance and forgiveness as explained by a participant in the study; I have developed great tolerance. ... Previously if anyone hurt me, I used to cut myself off from that person. ... I don't think now why he behaved this way. If possible I try to be good to him. Previously it never used to happen that way. If he has done wrong to me, then I will do the same. Now, however, it has happened such that I forgive them. Forgiving has become easy (P5)

This change experienced by participants seems to be due to their understanding of Rajyoga's deterministic view of the happenings in the world, that is, their understanding about the world drama and karma theory. Rajyoga sees life as world drama enacted by souls over the cycles of birth, death and rebirth for 5000 years, which is repeated eternally. Souls descend from incorporeal world (the original home) to the corporeal world (the stage) to play their part in the world drama. Bodies they reside in and eventually leave are the costumes worn for the various roles from the beginning to the end of the world. The world drama is a story of rise, fall and rise (again) of souls as they journey cyclically through 4 epochs of Golden Age (Satyug), Silver Age (Tretayug), Copper Age (Dwaparyug) and Iron Age (Kaliyug). The law of karma maintains that destiny of each soul is created by its actions. Each birth is the reflection of actions of past births. The soul takes

multiple births, as it has to play out the results of all past actions and reclaim its original state. Law of karma empowers the person to set right the future by present actions (Purushartha). Thus, instead of perceiving oneself as victim and asking “Why Me?” and blaming others or God for ones circumstances in life, knowledge of world drama and law of karma help individuals take each experience in their stride. Each experience is seen as created to undo the damage caused by past karmas.

The participants (10 = 66.67%) of the study realized that if they are experiencing conflict and suffering in some of their relationships, they are reflection of world drama, bad deeds of the past and karmic account with those people, which need to be settled now. They, therefore, started tolerating their pain and suffering and in the process developed those qualities that help them in their interpersonal relationship. This is rightly explained by a respondent as, ... I don't hurt anyone. ...If anyone discusses unpleasant thing, I change the topic or I explain my point of view without hurting anyone. ...I know so long as I have account with this person, I have to tolerate. So I continue to tolerate. ...With regular practice this account can be settled. ...I, time and again, emerge those people in my mind – if I have hurt them – I ask for forgiveness and I do forgive them too. (P14). Another respondent put it differently as, Just the way we take loan from someone and then we return it, we feel very happy...that way (when you get unpleasant experiences) the account is getting settled. There is no need to be upset. ...When we are playing, someone falls down. Similarly, view this (life) as also a game and then play. When traveling in train we see the scenery passing by. That is the way we entertain ourselves. Similarly let's view life as entertainment (P1).

Additionally, some participants (5 = 33.33%) shared their improved communication skills, which helped them in their relationships. This involved overcoming of fear to talk to people and stammering, looking in people's eyes and talking with confidence, talking softly, politely and with understanding. It is the practice of soul consciousness that helps individuals see themselves and others as souls – as their spiritual brothers. This takes away the differences of boss-subordinate, juniour-senior, rich-poor, which distances people from each other and hampers their communication.

Management of Stress

Many participants (10 = 66.67%) reported reduction of stress after they started their study and practice of Rajyoga. One very significant way in which participants found Rajyoga beneficial is the way they (5 = 33.37%)

learned to reappraise the events and circumstances in their lives as manageable. One of the participants of the study explain their experience as, the problems were there that time and they are there now also. But that time the situation was felt as mountain, now it is felt as small thing. (P5).

Through its concept of world drama, Rajyoga teaches people that life flows as per the script of the drama. Therefore, it urges one to relinquish the control, accept the situation as is and do the needful as per the demands of the situation by considering oneself as instrument (Nimitta), witness (Sakshi) and Trustee in this world drama. This understanding was reflected in responses of the participants (5 = 33.37%) and demonstrated the calming effect it had on them, which is clear in their words; I understand that whatever is happening is as per its schedule; if you are taking stress of those things, it doesn't make any difference to you or to your performance. Meaning whatever is happening let it happen (P12). They explain further that, if you have trust in God, its drama, then the biggest work becomes light. But if you do it as if you are the owner, then it becomes very heavy. If you do it by becoming trustee... .. if we do it by becoming instrument, then the work becomes very light. Whoever is there – your wife, children... you see them as God's children, I have to do just seva, and it becomes light. If there is ego, then it (responsibility) becomes very heavy (P1).

Moreover, Rajyoga reassures that what is happening in the drama is beneficial in terms of evolution of soul towards its original state. This realization took fear and struggle away from the participants (4 = 26.67%). Drama is beneficial (kalyankari). Whatever is happening is appropriate. It is good that it is happening. This changes the way one looks at the problems (P14), describes a respondent.

Rajyoga also helped reduce participants' stress by increasing their self-efficacy ("I can do it") feeling. This is achieved by helping participants understand that it is the way they think that matters the most. Thus, Rajyoga restored the locus of control within the self even in the otherwise pre-ordained world drama as seen in the responses of many participants (8 = 53.33%). A participants try to elucidate the point as, I have solutions to my problems within me. I have a power to face the problems. Only I need to recognize it and use it appropriately. Previously I used to think bad time will change sometime. Now I realize that each moment is good. I need to learn how to use it.... (P13). Yet another participants says that... I realized one

thing ... I am more powerful than the situation. (If anyone thinks) that he is very weak, then he is really so weak that there is no one more weak than him. Or if he thinks that I am so powerful, then there is nothing impossible for him. ...that time, age does not matter or whether you are gents or ladies or whether you are poor or rich (P5).

Management of Negative Emotions/ Experiences

As participants studied and practiced the basic tenets of Rajyoga, that is, soul consciousness, life as world drama and karma theory in their day to day life, it helped participants overcome number of negative emotions. Out of which anger was the most commonly reported (12 = 80%) emotion. One participant puts it vividly, I was short tempered. I used to get angry a lot. But after joining Rajyoga, anger still comes but it does not go out of situation. I can understand myself. I understand what is right and wrong. I understand that situation will come and go. (P5). Several respondents have similar experience as they explain...I used to get angry on everything ...I used to throw my mobile in anger. Since I came here (Rajyoga) nothing of such kind happened...previously I never used to listen to what my roommates said and never understood themHowever now I try to listen to them, understand what their point of view is. (P12).

Rajyoga helped few participants (4 = 26.67%) to overcome their fears also as narrated by them...Previously I used to fear my daughter going away. Then what would I do? If my son goes away, what would I do? Now ... I am happy in all situations. The fear of loneliness has gone away (P5).

In addition, depression is another emotional issue that brought five (5 = 33.33%) participants to Rajyoga and they experienced complete recovery. Thus, initial fear, hesitation, low self-esteem, and skepticism of the participants were replaced by self-confidence. At the same time, they (9 = 60%) developed positive attitude towards life and started facing events with cheerfulness as is clear from these words, since I started coming to Rajyoga ...I started smiling. Genuinely...I stopped telling people my problems. ...I stopped crying on small issues. ...I developed fighting spirit (P13).

Rajyoga also helped participants (4 = 26.67%) cope with negative experiences by not brooding over them. It encouraged participants put full stop to the past, not dwell on why, how, what of the situation and focus on the present. This experience is beautifully narrated by one respondent as ...I

feel individual really gets upset because he carries his past with him everywhere. When I came here (in Rajyoga), I realized that past is past and now it is over. I was carrying my past everywhere ...I realized that I was hurting myself by keeping those people in my life. ...Now it does not happen, because I put full stop. (P13). The words of another participants is more revealing. ...in my business, people of thousand different temperaments come. Someone comes and asks me to cut the bananas and then says I don't want and goes away. Previously I used to feel very angry. Now I say it's ok. I don't get into why, what, how, where, who. ...if I go into these questions, it creates hassles, it creates disturbance. I put full stop. (P1)

Ability to Seek Divine Support

One significant thing that contributed to participants' feeling of well-being after joining Rajyoga was the deep faith that they (14 = 93.33%) developed the presence of Supreme Soul (lovingly called Baba) in their lives, as they told....previously I had expectation from the people and my happiness was dependent on them. Now I realized that Baba (Supreme Soul) is with me and happiness is within me (P13).

Participants experienced this presence in different ways. Firstly by experiencing Him in various relations with them such as their Father, Mother, Friend, Teacher and Guide. Secondly by treating Him as a constant companion and "not leaving Him and not doing anything without Him" as shared by P6. Thirdly, by developing an ability to surrender one's issues to the Supreme Soul. Trust and faith are the corner stone as is clear from their words, we always take the company of Baba. Then what happens, all fear goes away. ...Whenever such feeling comes, kya hoga? Baba is there. Baba will take care. He is with us. That confidence is there. It is a sort of power you get. (P10).

Practice of Rajyoga involves developing relationship with God and having yoga (meditation, loving remembrance) with God. According to Cognitive Perspective, disturbing thoughts about the events determine one's emotional state. Therefore, pulling one's attention and thoughts away from worldly things for the time being, diverting them towards the Supreme Soul and His divine qualities, creating positive thoughts regarding our relationship with Him and His role in our life and churning of various points of spiritual knowledge offered by Him stabilize and energize one's soul. One participant of the study explain their experience....When I came here, that time I heard

that one should never think negative. When I got knowledge, I started thinking positive. If any waste thoughts would come to mind, I meditated knowledge points (P1).

Rajyoga thus encouraged participants to seek support from divine by making the Supreme Soul the centre of one's life, around whom all the activities would be carried out. Besides, strong belief that they develop that God is Karankaravanhar (the one who inspires us to act) and we are Karanhar (the one who acts) made the tasks easier for the participants. They illustrate; everything is so quiet and peaceful. Now I can do the work without taking strain. Previously there used to be fear – if I don't do it this way, then that will happen. Now I feel whatever I am doing is fine. Baba is getting it done from me. I feel that things are simple. If I make mistake, Baba will correct me (P3)

Conclusion

Thus, Rajyoga helped participants make sense of their own selves, God and the happenings in the world. This knowledge gave them renewed self-perception, an effective way of relating to others, circumstances and events in their life and helped to develop positive attitude and ways of life that is empowering – that is, instead of getting overwhelmed by the circumstances, the self is empowered and learns to cope effectively with the same.

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Attachment Security, Rejection Sensitivity and Negative Automatic Thoughts among Late Adolescent

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at exploring whether attachment security to parents and rejection sensitivity are significant predictors of negative automatic thoughts during adolescence. The sample consisted of late adolescents (N = 186), both males (n = 89) and females (n = 97) of age ranging from 17- 20 years, chosen from the various institutions in Trivandrum district, Kerala. Inventory for Parent and Peer Attachment scale (IPPA), Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (RSQ) and Automatic Thought Questionnaire (ATQ- 30) were administered. Data were processed for correlation and step-wise regression analyses. Correlation analysis revealed that there exist significant negative relationship between attachment security to parents and negative automatic thoughts and also between attachment security to parents and rejection sensitivity. However, there was no significant relationship between rejection sensitivity and negative automatic thoughts. Results of step-wise regression pointed that lack of attachment security to parents, particularly the father, is a strong predictor of negative automatic thoughts whereas rejection sensitivity did not emerge as a significant predictor.

Key words

Attachment security, Rejection sensitivity, Negative automatic thoughts.

Introduction

‘Adolescence’ is a period of developmental transition between childhood and adulthood entailing major physical, cognitive and psychosocial changes (Hall, 1910). An adolescent is a person who is traversing through the adolescence period. Usually, adolescents feel strained between dependency on their parents and the need to break away. Parents also often have mixed feelings. They want their children to be independent, yet find it hard to let

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them free. Parents have a fine line between giving adolescents enough independence and protecting them from immature lapses in decision making. These intense feelings often lead to family conflict, and its shape and outcome normally depends on the influence of parenting styles. In addition to that, parents' life situation such as marital status, nature of work, work related issues and socio-economic status also affects the intensity of relationship with teen age children. The security that the children get from their parents part, figures very important as it molds the children to face their life.

Forming and maintaining positive and lasting relationships is a basic factor of human motivation. Like the need for food, water and shelter, the need to belong is deeply rooted in our evolutionary history (Baumeister & focused almost exclusively on the mother-infant relationship. What had been discrete experiences in individual attachment relationships (i.e., with mothers and with fathers) in childhood, with the development of the attachment system in adolescence, join in contributing to a more general overall working model of oneself in attachment relationships (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985). Adolescents with insecure attachment have lower levels of confidence, avoid problem solving, have more dysfunctional anger and have higher levels of internalizing symptoms compared with securely attached adolescents (Allen, Moore Kuperminc & Bell, 1998).

There has been a tendency on account of Indian childhood development, to emphasize the mother-infant bond and early administrations by the mother as the key to the Indian child's early development. Kakar's (1992) claims about men's roles in the Indian family are rooted in the traditional structural-functional dichotomy of gender-linked roles and responsibilities. Indian society is currently witnessing unprecedented social and technological changes, putting pressure on family practices to deviate from the traditional norms of child-rearing. The adaptive strategies employed by families in meeting the demands of a more industrialized and literate Indian society are not understood adequately.

Rejection by others is an inherently unpleasant event to which human beings normally react with some degree of distress (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Rejection sensitivity (RS) is an individual's tendency to expect, readily perceive and react extremely to rejection (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Research suggests that sensitive people are more likely to interpret ambiguous interpersonal situations, real or imagined, as rejections and thus overreact to them (Downey & Feldman, 1996, 1994). RS can lead to loneliness, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and reduction of one's ability to cope with social interaction and even violence in romantic relationships (Downey, Feldman, 2000).

Children who do not get enough parental warmth and security are more prone to develop a sense of rejection from the part of others and tend to develop more negative views on themselves and others. They also expect things to turn around negatively. The negative thought that arises in response to particular situation or event is termed as negative automatic thought. The term automatic is used because these thoughts occur so quickly that they are often not recognized by the person and more importantly, the significant impact these thoughts have on subsequent emotional and behavioral reactions goes unnoticed. Salkovskis (1999) inflated responsibility model proposes that obsessions represent the extreme end of a continuum of normal, unwanted intrusive cognitions (Rachman & de Silva, 1978). Salkovskis (1999) argues that as the content of normal intrusive thoughts and clinical obsessions is indistinguishable, the distinctive feature between the two is the interpretation of the intrusion. Intrusive thoughts develop into clinical obsessions when the individual interprets the intrusions as implying high personal responsibility and significance (Clark, 2004).

In the present scenario, what we can observe is the decrease of moral values, high insecurity and negative thoughts among our upcoming generation. The main reason is that the growing generation of today's world lacks the proper attachment to their parents which paves the way for their internal sense of rejection. This is because they do not form healthy and nurturing attachment. In this study, the relationship between attachment security, rejection sensitivity and negative automatic thoughts among late adolescents are focused. The study also aims to understand whether attachment security to father, mother; and rejection sensitivity are significant predictors of negative automatic thoughts.

Objectives

- ◆ To find the relationship that exists between attachment security, rejection sensitivity and negative automatic thoughts.
- ◆ To find whether negative automatic thoughts among late adolescents are predicted by the attachment security to father, mother and rejection sensitivity.

On the basis of this objective, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is significant relationship among attachment security, rejection sensitivity and negative automatic thoughts among late adolescents.
2. Attachment security to father, mother, and rejection sensitivity are significant predictors of negative automatic thoughts.

Method of study

Participants

The sample (N= 186) consists of students, chosen from the various institutions of Trivandrum district, Kerala. There were 89 boys and 97 girl students in the age range 17-20 years.

Measures

1. **Personal Data Schedule:** The personal data schedule was used to collect information on variables such as age, gender and birth order.
2. **Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA):** IPPA (Armsden & Greenberg, 1986) is the scale which is used to assess adolescent's perception of the positive and negative affective/ cognitive dimension of relationships with their parents and close friends, particularly how well these figures serve as sources of psychological security. The present study uses the revised version (mother, father and peer) which consists of 25 items in each of the father, mother and peer sections (25+25+25), yielding three different attachment scores. For the present study, only mother and father sections were considered. Reliability: Three week test-retest reliabilities for a sample of 18-20 years old were 0.93 for parental attachment. For the revised version, internal reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) are: mother attachment- 0.87; and father attachment- 0.89. With respect to validity, Armsden and Greenberg (1987) found parent IPPA attachment scores to correlate significantly with levels of family support, conflict and cohesiveness and with a tendency to seek the parents in times of need.
3. **Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (RSQ- 8 items)** (Downey, 1996): is intended to measure an individual's level of RS- personal. There are two versions: one includes 8 Items and the other includes 18 items. The total number of items in the scale is 8. The scores in the scale range from 1 (low) to 36 (high). Reliability: The test retest reliability (n= 104) was found to be 0.83. Internal consistency was found to be 0.81. Correlation with score on the Beck's Depression Inventory was found to be 0.35. The correlation with scores on the social avoidance and distress scale (n= 295) was found to be 0.41.
4. **Automatic Thought Questionnaire (ATQ)** (Kendall & Steven, 1980): Automatic thought questionnaire is a 30 item questionnaire which is used to measure the frequency of occurrence of automatic negative thoughts (negative self-statements) associated with depression. Each item consists of a single thought such as "I hate myself". Participants are asked to rate each item on a 5 point scale indicating frequency of rumination (1 = not at all to 5 = all the time). Scores can range from a minimum of 30 to a maximum of 150, with higher scores indicating greater

frequency of depressotypic cognitive rumination.

Procedure for Data Collection

The permission was secured from the respective authorities of the institutions and the participants were administered the personal data schedule, inventory for parent and peer attachment inventory and automatic thought questionnaire. They were asked to read the instructions carefully and answer the questions without neglecting any. The participants were assured that their responses would be kept confidential.

Data analyses

Data were analyzed using the SPSS software. The variables included in the analysis were the negative automatic thoughts as the DV and attachment security to father, mother and rejection sensitivity as IV.

Results and Discussion

Correlation and Step-Wise Regression were the statistical techniques used.

(a) Relationship among attachment security, rejection sensitivity and negative automatic thoughts

Table -1

The relationship between attachment security of father (AS_F) and mother (AS_M) and negative automatic thoughts (NAT)

		RS	NAT	AS_F	AS_M
RS	Pearson Correlation	1	.072	-.159*	-.148*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.329	.030	.043
	N	186	186	186	186
NAT	Pearson Correlation		1	-.389**	-.362**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	.000
	N		186	186	186
AS_F	Pearson Correlation			1	.571**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000
	N			186	186
AS_M	Pearson Correlation				1
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N				186

*correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

***correlation is significant at the 0.001 level

Table -1 shows the result of the Pearson product moment correlation of the three study variables: attachment security: both father (AS_F) as well as of mother (AS_M), rejection sensitivity (RS) and negative automatic thoughts (NAT). The result reveals that there exists significant negative correlation between the variables RS, AS_F ($r = -0.16, p < 0.05$), AS_M ($r = -0.15, p < 0.05$) and also between NAT and AS_M ($r = -0.36, p < 0.001$) and AS_F ($r = -0.39, p < 0.001$). The results point out that as the attachment between children and parents increases, rejection sensitivity (RS) and negative automatic thoughts (NAT) decreases and vice versa. In the present study attachment security of the father has an ascendancy over that of mother in reducing rejection sensitivity and negative automatic thoughts among adolescents. Fathers play a major role in the proper development of every child. The major role of father is to provide a feeling of security to their family and act as a role model for their children to follow. Therefore, insecure attachment with the father figure will definitely produce a kind of negative impact on the development of the child. The attachment security with the mother cannot be discounted as, mother is the first object with which every child starts to internalize and relate. Mother's attachment forms the foundation for all later development of an individual's relationships. The obtained result can be traced to Karen Horney's attachment theory that, when a child feels isolated and helpless, they develop insecure attachment to their parents, which results in developing 'basic anxiety' (Horney, 1937). To overcome the basic anxiety, children engage in irrational ways. Rejection sensitivity (RS) and negative automatic thoughts (NAT) are the end result of insecure attachment of the child with their parents.

When children become insecurely attached to their parents, they feel a sense of being 'rejected' in almost every interpersonal relationships in which they engage. Contrary to those who have insecure attachment, those who have secure attachments have a feeling of confidence in the available support and love of attachment figures and are motivated to feel good about themselves. Feeling good about oneself protects one against threats. The result of this study confirmed the association between attachment security, rejection sensitivity and negative automatic thoughts. That is also supported by the finding of Erozkhan (2009) and Downey and Feldman (1996). These studies also revealed the relationship between attachment insecurity and rejection sensitivity.

However, there was no significant relationship between negative automatic thoughts and rejection sensitivity. Both negative automatic thoughts and rejection sensitivity have negative correlation with attachment security of the parents but they are not correlated with each other.

(a) Attachment Security to mother, father and rejection sensitivity as predictors of Negative Automatic Thoughts

Table 2 shows the result of step-wise regression with negative automatic thoughts (NAT) as dependent variable and attachment security to father and attachment security to mother as independent variables.

Table 2

Step-wise regression analysis with NAT as dependent variable and attachment security of father and attachment security of mother as independent variables

Model	Dependent variable	Predictor variables	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Standard error of the estimate	R square change	Sig	Beta coefficient
1	NAT	AS_F	0.389	0.151	0.147	18.938	.151	0.000	-0.389
2		AS_F, AS_M	0.425	0.180	0.171	18.663	.029	0.012	-0.207

Regression analysis revealed that 18% ($R^2 = 0.180$) of the total variance in negative automatic thoughts is accounted for by attachment security of parents. The most significant predictor of NAT was found to be attachment security to father ($R = 0.389$; $R^2 = 0.151$). The R^2 of 0.151 indicates that 15.1% of the total variance in NAT is explained by the attachment security of father. Beta coefficient corresponding to the attachment security of father was found to be -0.389. The negative value indicates that as the attachment security to father decreases, the negative automatic thoughts increases. The result can be explained in the context of Indian culture. Every family in our culture tries to make their children model their father's qualities and thereby become an efficient and productive individual. Thus, every child builds a special attachment with their fathers and establishes an attachment bridge between them. If the attachment pattern is secure, the child internalizes the major qualities of their father and develops a trusting relationship. If the attachment pattern is insecure, the child withdraws from every possible interaction with their father which results in a sense of feeling rejected and views the world around them in a negative pattern.

Attachment security to mother (Rsquare change = 0.029) accounted for only 2.9% of the total variance in NAT apart from the attachment security to father. The beta coefficient of mother's attachment security was found

to be -0.207, which also points out that as attachment security with mother decreases, negative automatic thoughts increases. A child becomes more attached to their mother as the mother is the first object that the child internalizes right from their birth (Klein, 1948). Any disturbance during the first years in their attachment bond will disrupt the healthy growth of the child especially during the psychological birth (Mahler, 1956). Field (1994) pointed out that mother's emotional unavailability is highly distressing, even more than the mother's temporary physical unavailability. This can lead to an insecure attachment with the mother. This makes the child vulnerable to rejection. The negative beta values indicated the fact that low scores in paternal attachment security ($B = -0.389$) and maternal attachment security ($B = -0.207$) were associated with high scores in negative automatic thoughts.

Rejection sensitivity, even though was included in the study as a predictor of NAT, was not found to be a significant predictor of negative automatic thoughts. Gitanjali (2011) attempted to capture the theorized link between rejection sensitivity and attachment pattern. Rejection sensitivity was found to partially mediate the association between attachment security and psychosocial adjustment in early adolescence. Rejection sensitivity did not emerge as a significant predictor of negative automatic thoughts perhaps due to the fact that both rejection sensitivity and negative automatic thoughts are precipitated by insecure parental attachment, and that it is attachment security that mediates the link between rejection sensitivity and negative automatic thoughts. However, further researches are needed to delineate the mediating role of attachment security in the NAT_RS link.

The present study shows that there is significant relationship among attachment security, rejection sensitivity and negative automatic thoughts. A negative correlation exists between attachment security to parents and negative automatic thoughts and also with rejection sensitivity and attachment security. Attachment security to father is a more potent predictor of NAT when compared to attachment security to mother. Rejection sensitivity does not predict negative automatic thoughts. From the results obtained, it can be concluded that both the stated hypotheses can be accepted.

However, there is a limitation in the generalization of the results as the collection of sample was confined to one district. Attempts were not made to analyze the differences in socio-economic status. External variables (e.g. adolescents with divorced parents, parentless adolescents etc.) that play a role in affecting the variables under study were not identified and controlled. Despite these limitations, the findings will be helpful to parents to focus on the welfare of late adolescents, to plan clinical intervention programs aimed

at lowering the negative automatic thoughts in insecurely attached adolescents to avoid the risk of maladjustment in various areas of interpersonal relationships. The study has important clinical implications in the interventions focusing on lowering the negative automatic thoughts in insecurely attached adolescents which would help to avoid maladjustment in various areas of interpersonal relationships.

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Coping Skills for Victims of Ethnic Violence in Assam

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Abstract

Ethnic conflict is probably the most common form of collective violence which took more lives than any other form of violence in the 20th century. An ethnic riot can be defined as a calamity in which more than 100 people are killed, which results in curfews, serious social disorder, all sorts of personal and social inconveniences, indignity, outrage and creates a number of refugees. The current researcher conducted a qualitative study to explore the various types of coping strategies adopted by (N= 60) victims (direct and secondary) of Bodo ethnic conflict between Bodos and Bengali-speaking Muslims which escalated into a riot in Kokrajhar on 20th July 2012. In-depth interview was taken using semi-structured interview schedule. The researcher attempts to suggest effective ways of coping with emotions as an essential life skill to help the victims deal with the emotional crisis. Thematic analysis of the interview revealed the various types of coping strategies adopted by the victims of ethnic conflict. The researcher suggests rehabilitation models that can be implemented by the victims of ethnic violence to promote psycho-social competence.

Key words: ethnic violence, victims, emotional crisis, coping strategies

Introduction

Ethnicity has been an area of study for social scientists since early 19th century. Ethnic conflicts are probably the most common form of collective violence which took more lives than any other form of violence in the 20th century. Psychologically, ethnic conflict is stimulated mainly by the fear of losing privileges. These conflicts are one of the type of man-made disaster in which pain experienced by these victims are violence induced. These conflicts produces both physical damage as well as emotional effects which can't be neglected upon. Irrespective of the type of victims (direct/ secondary/indirect) all of them experience inconveniences at interpersonal, social, economical, emotional level. But, there exist difference in duration of these sufferings i.e. for some victims these difficulties are short term and fades

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with time and for few victims these emotional effects are long-lasting which if not treated on time will handicap a person psychologically, making him or her less resourceful in coping with events.

North-eastern region of India is rich in diversity with the presence of over 225 communities and of more than 150 mother tongues being spoken in this beautiful land. Among these communities there exists fear of losing their identity which is one of the main cause behind this ethnic conflicts. Ethnic clashes have become a very common social issue of these states. Assam being one of the highly affected regions in north-east with issues of terror attack, ethnic violence being the primary cause of tension in this state. The unresolved issue of Assam movement (1979-1985) which was primarily launched to drive out illegal migrants from Assam, Assam Accord that was signed in 1985 has not been properly executed till date which is creating more distrust and feeling of insecurity among the ethnic communities of Assam and the northeast are the primary causes of ethnic clashes in the region.

The current paper is focussing on the recently happened ethnic violence in Kokrajhar in July, 2012 between the Bodo tribe and the Muslim settlers, which ran over two months killing more than 100 people, displacing over five lakh as helpless. All this is nothing new for Kokrajhar and communities living in Bodoland Territorial Autonomous Districts (BTAD) of Assam.

Post-independence, the Bodos, who are aboriginals of the area and the biggest tribal groups of Assam have clashed with the Adivasi tea tribes, the Muslim settlers and even the Bengali Hindus. The Bodos with slightly more than 30% of total population are 'Minority' against the Non-Bodos who are little less than 70% population in the area. Amongst the non-Bodos the Bengali speaking Muslim settlers, who are often branded as Bangladeshis, owing to the fact that lower Assam has experienced years of illegal migration from neighbouring Bangladesh.

Kokrajhar district can be described as the gateway to the north eastern region of India. The district headquarters are located at Kokrajhar. The district has a total area of 3,169.22 sq. km. and a total population of 8,86,999 according to 2011 census. The northeast Indian railway divides the city into two sides, north and south. Kokrajhar city is the headquarter of Kokrajhar district and the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). It forms the gateway to the seven sister states of India. Kokrajhar shares its boundary with Bongaigaon (now known as Chirang), Dhubri, West Bengal, Barpeta and Bhutan. The district is multi-ethnic, with no majority ethnic group. Most of the Bodo and

Assamese are Hindus, with a small Christian minority. Almost all of the Bengalis are Muslims, while more than 90% of the Santhals are Christians. The main inhabitants are Bodos, Koch Rajbongshis, Nepali, Assamese, Bengalis, Garo, Santalis and other communities too. The current paper is focusing on the Bodo ethnic group who were the victims of Kokrajhar ethnic conflict. These victims have experienced lot of difficulties as it demanded change in life style, cognitive-behavioural thought processes. Many victims who survived are still staying in the rehabilitation camps because of their inability to overcome the feeling of insecurity, psychological trauma. The survivors are special types of patients, and they would be missed and continue to suffer if not treated.

Aftermath of a disaster (natural/ man-made) is disastrous and it paves the path for psychological damage among the victims (direct/secondary/indirect) which impairs the coping style, thought process, attitude towards life, life style, psyche. If these damages are not taken care of it leads to development of various psychological problems, creating permanent scars on their personalities. Another reason that leads to various problems in victims' life after disaster is the inadequate use of life skills which are essential in every individual's life to overcome the difficulties.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO) "life skills are the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life". Victims of ethnic conflict are found to be low in managing emotions effectively which makes their life complex. Coping with emotions is one of the life skills essential for an individual, which involves recognizing emotions within us and others, being aware of how emotions influence behaviour and being able to respond to emotions appropriately. Intense emotions like anger or sadness can have negative effects on our health if we do not respond appropriately. Along with victim's individual suffering, they also add to the socio- economic problem.

Objectives of the study

1. To develop an understanding of the emotions experienced by the victims of ethnic violence.
2. To explore the various coping mechanisms adopted by the victims of ethnic violence.
3. To suggest effective ways of coping with emotions as an essential life skill to help the victims to deal with emotional crisis.

Research Method

Sample

The total number of the sample selected for the current study was 60 adults (N=60) who were victims of ethnic violence that occurred in Kokrajhar, 2012. The age of the participants ranges from 25-60 years. Criterion based sampling popularly known as purposive sampling was employed in selecting the sample. Equal number of male and female victims were chosen for the study (Male=30, Female=30). The victims chosen for the current study were primary and secondary in nature.

Measures/ Tools and Procedure

Semi-structured interview schedule: In-depth interview of the victims were conducted with the help of a semi-structured interview schedule. The interview schedule comprised of both open and closed ended questions. The questions were primarily focused in exploring the nature of injury, psycho-social burden witnessed by the victims, coping mechanisms adopted by the victims, role of government and non-governmental institutions in rehabilitating victims.

Procedure of data collection: The semi-structured interview schedule was developed by the researcher keeping in mind the objectives of the current study. The researcher conducted an in-depth interview with the help of the schedule in order to explore the issue of focus of the current study. Keeping in mind the purpose of the current study, the researcher chose the samples from the rehabilitation camps situated in Kokrajhar. Through in-depth interview the researcher attempted to explore the experiences of surviving an ethnic violence which fulfilled the DSM-IV criteria to be labelled as an incident which has the potential to create trauma. Interview was conducted in Assamese and was recorded using voice recorder with the consent of the participants of the current study. Observation was also a part of the data collection process. The recordings of the interview along with the behavioural observation records were transcribed into English for the convenience of the researcher keeping in mind the fact that the actual meaning of the responses of the participant remains intact. All the sixty transcripts were further analysed qualitatively using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in order to identify the commonly occurring themes across the interviews of the respondents of the current study. The steps followed for deriving at the themes are tabulated below:

Table 1:

Table representing process of Thematic Analysis
as proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006)

Phase of analysis	Description of process
Familiarizing with the data	Transcribing data (Assamese to English), reading and re-reading the data
Initial codes generated	Coding of the interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code
Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes
Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extract and the entire data set
Defining and naming themes	Generating clear definition and name for each theme
Producing the report	Producing scholarly report of the analysis

Result and Discussion

The ethnic conflict put under investigation in the current study is an event which created debilitating psycho-social burden among the survivors of the disastrous episode. It produced trauma related symptoms which impaired the coping skills of these victims. When such event occurs, the inner agency of the mind loses its ability to control the disorganizing effects of the experiences and disequilibrium occurs. The trauma tears up the individual's psychological anchors, which are fixed in a secure sense of what has been in the past and what should be in the present (Erikson, 1968).

Ehrenreich, H, J. (2001) conceptualised stages of disaster and according to these stages the victims interviewed for the current study were in the reconstruction stage which occurs a year or more after the disaster. During this phase, although many victims may have recovered on their own, a substantial number continue to show symptoms much like those of the preceding ("inventory") stage. Victims become aware of the reality of their permanence of their losses.

One of the significant finding of the current study is that although the victims were interviewed after two years of the episode still the emotional crisis prevailed among the victims. During the interview while narrating their experiences most of the victims cried. They all shared "it's like reliving the moment again". Most of them reported that the image of houses burning, bloodshed, smoke, ashes still can be recollected vividly. Technically these experiences can be labelled as flashbacks and recollection of memories.

Victims reported experiences of shock, fear, feeling of insecurity, anxiety, apprehension about future. One of the victim said its “almost two years and we are still living in these camps because we are scared to go back to our villages. We don’t feel safe anymore in our villages. Rather we feel safe in these camps itself although facilities of these camps are not at all good. Government aids are not being provided”. (Quote from BN, secondary victims).

Another objective of the current study is to explore the coping strategies adopted by the primary and the secondary victims of the ethnic violence. Analysis of the responses of the participants of the current study, the following coping strategies were found to be adopted by the victims:

Attribution: The participants attributed the suffering of the victims of the blast to supernatural power (God/ Allah), luck or destiny and some are even attributing the cause of the blast and violence to “Karma”/ Fate. This is one of the characteristic ways in which Indians attribute unpleasant or painful incidents. This can be referred to as use of coping with stress as a life skill for overcoming the obstacles and challenges they witness after being the victim of such disastrous ethnic conflict. One thing that needs mention here is that these victims are attributing external locus of control to the situation indicating feeling of helplessness among them. This indicates use of maladaptive coping skill as a response towards the situation. It is clear from the words of a respondent that, “I believe that its all the will of God and no one can stop that from happening. “Ami to tusya prani bhogbanor agot”(Human beings are inferior to God). So, whatever plan he has stored for us will definitely happen. Life is bound by relationship which is a form of “Maya” and one day we all will have to live away all this and go from this earth. It is all “Karma”, i.e. either in past or present I must have committed sin.”(Quote from Mr. P.D. Secondary victim)

Acceptance of situation: The participants of the study accepted the situation as a part of life. They did not take a long period of time to accept the situation because of the level of exposure to similar terrifying acts (not necessarily by being the direct victim). All the participants reside in Assam since ages and they have been hearing about blast, ethnic riots frequently throughout their lives and so in a way they have become conditioned to occurrence of such kind of incident. Thus, it helped them to cope with the crisis followed by the disaster in a better way. Acceptance serves as an adaptive coping mechanism indicating the use of coping with emotions as a life skill.

Engaging in recreational activities: Victims mentioned of preoccupying themselves by engaging themselves in recreational activities in order to prevent the memory of the ethnic violence which keeps on bothering them very often. This is another adaptive coping mechanism adopted by the survivors of the trauma.

Indigenous healer: Folk healing traditions are widely prevalent in our culture. In North east indigenous healing is frequently used among the residents. The same trend was observed in many of the interviews. The participants mentioned taking the help of healers (kabiraj) with the hope of getting relief from the agony and struggle of life. This is another kind of coping strategy used by the survivors of the trauma which can be named as use of coping with stress life skill. This life skill has helped these victims to obtain temporary relief from the stress and strain that they have been experiencing of the perceived stress from the situation. “Kabiraj.... The person gave us “tabeej” which we are still wearing(Shows the neck). My wife believe in it a lot so I am wearing it.”(Quote from Mr. S. Direct victim).

Other folk healing method adopted were astrology, holy threads etc. Despite its use many participants especially the male members in the family mentioned the lack of belief in healing practices. They mentioned that all these practices are unreal and only the Almighty can save them from odds and difficulties. In the current study the victims interviewed are all from north-eastern region of India and the practice of use of folk healing techniques are still prevalent here.

Belief in God: Among all the interviews the commonly occurring themes was belief in God. All the participants were religious by nature and portrayed a deep, strong belief in Almighty. They said that by chanting name of God it becomes easy to resolve the difficulties they are undergoing. Most of them offered regular prayer. This aspect of religiosity itself serves as use of adaptive life skill to face the situation. Thus, the victims are using coping with emotion as the life skill as suggested by World Health Organisation.

Family support: Families experience a wide variety of stressors associated with both positive and negative events. All experience stress as a result of change, whether change is “good” or “bad”. Disaster affect families externally which adds to stress in a family system. Similarly the participants interviewed mentioned that during the times of crisis it was only their family members who were constantly with them and provided them a lot of moral support which helped them to overcome the stress associated with the disaster and helping them to lead a better life. This indicates the use of adap-

tive coping mechanism to deal with stress which is a very essential life skill for human beings. This indicates the use of social skill for fostering interpersonal relationship among the survivors of the trauma which is another life skill. “My daughters are providing me and my wife a lot of moral support and this is the reason me and my wife are still surviving.”(Quote from Mr. P.D. Secondary victim). Many of the direct victims reported that after the incident their confidence, self-esteem level decreased, but the support of the family members helped them to overcome the difficulties and helping to develop an optimistic outlook towards life.

Acceptance of situation: Accepting the situation as a part of life is one of the coping mechanism adopted by the victims portraying the feeling of helplessness. In families where there is a death of family member they are accepting the reality of life, i.e. life and death are inseparable. This is an adaptive form of coping mechanism used by the participants. “Life doesn’t wait for anyone and neither with the loss of one family member it will stop. We all have accepted it. God is there to help us. I still believe in God and go to “namghar” to offer prayer”.(Quote from Mrs. S.D. secondary victim).

Based on the analysis of the interviews it was evident that the victims had accepted the tragic event as a part of their life but the mental health of the victims need to be taken care of. All the victims adopted adaptive as well as maladaptive coping strategy to resolve the issue of conflict without resorting to violence. From the interviews the current researcher felt that the narratives of the victims were pathological to certain extent and if further investigation is done these victims will qualify the diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Acute Stress Disorder (ASD), mood disorders, anxiety disorders. Keeping in mind the mental health status of the victims, the current researcher would like to suggest effective ways of coping with emotions as an essential life skill to help the victims deal with emotional crisis.

Researcher feels that “Psycho-Social Care is the need of the hour”. The concept of psycho-social care is not a new one but in Assam the concept is in its inception. Generally the role of government is always questioned after the occurrence of tragic episode in rehabilitating victims. But the question that needs to be asked is “Is it sufficient to criticise government?” The answer here would be “NO”.

The present paper does not attempt to investigate the role of government. Rather, the current paper attempts to point out the role of mental health professionals in north eastern state of India. The researcher asked the par-

ticipants of the study on the role of different organisations/ people after the incident. Few of the respondents said “No, as such no one came forward for help”. Few individuals had come to do some research. They asked questions like you but after that nothing has happened.”

The researcher feels that training of mental health professionals in disaster care is a dire need. Once, the training is done following a team based approach, community counselling and psycho-social rehabilitation should be provided to the victims. This would benefit the survivors of such tragic incident to adopt effective coping mechanism. This would enhance quality of life of the survivors. McFarlane (1995) studied the relationship between training and preparation to post- disaster adjustment. He found positive correlation between these two variables. Education about possible disaster experiences and ways of dealing with them, training through simulations and awareness of likely psychological reaction in both responders and survivors are very helpful.

Life skills training is another required aspect that needs to be attended to and incorporated as one of the essential aspects of the training programme of mental health professionals to rehabilitate victims after such ethnic conflict or any other disaster. Mental health professionals should be provided with life skills training in the form of workshops, seminars, conferences. Apart from this educational institutions need to introduce courses on life skills at graduate and post graduate level which would produce professionals in this field. These students can be employed later on whenever such tragic incident occurs as a part of psycho-social rehabilitation process. Keeping in view the state of north-eastern states of India the concept of life skills needs a thorough introduction among professionals which would foster community development on a larger scale.

Conclusion

The current study revealed the emotional experiences of victims surviving ethnic violence which is universal in nature i.e. aftermath of any disaster (natural/man-made) produces emotional crisis. It was found that even after two years the recollection of memories of the days of the ethnic conflict remains vividly in the minds of the survivors. This indicates the seriousness and necessity of conducting further investigation into the issue pertaining to north-eastern states of India. The research highlighted that the coping mechanism adopted by the victims were not very effective and hence educating the survivors as well as the mental health professionals of the region is of serious concern. Life skills training needs to be introduced in the region.

Relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction need to take place as rapidly as possible, and with the greatest degree of transparency and community involvement. Until and unless the state realises that one has to respect diversity and try to build an inclusive society by adopting policies that explicitly recognise cultural differences, these conflicts between various communities is likely to prevail in this state and disrupt the socio-economic development of the region.

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Competency Building for Management of Aggression among Children

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Abstract

The present study was carried out in two cultural zones of Haryana state. Total sample constituted of 400 children, 200 in experimental group and 200 in control group. All these children were pre-tested for their problem solving skills with peers in hypothetical situations. Six stories were used, three for obtaining access to an object in another child's possession and three for consequential thinking after grabbing a toy from another child. The child being interviewed was asked what the story character could do or say in each situation to accomplish the desired goal. Strategies suggested by children were coded as positive or aggressive for alternative thinking. For consequential thinking, number of consequences suggested by children was computed. Use of aggressive strategies in interpersonal dilemmas is one of the indicators of anger and aggression in children. It is very important to build competency in children to manage aggression from early years to prevent its ill effects on children and others. Hence, intervention programme was developed and imparted to experimental group children for a period of two months to build competency for alternative and consequential thinking for management of aggression. The intervention programme included a series of lessons that teaches children basic skills and problem-solving language. Results revealed that in both the cultural zones, after exposure to intervention programme, experimental group children suggested significantly more number of positive and lesser numbers of aggressive strategies to solve interpersonal problems with peers as compared to control group children. Experimental group children also expressed significantly greater number of consequences as compared to control group children. Thus, it can be interpreted from these findings that intervention programme helped in competency building through alternative and consequential thinking for management of aggression.

Key Words: Problem solving, competency building, anger management

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Introduction

Childhood aggression is one of the strongest predictors of violent behavior in later life. Aggression in children needs attention and every parent needs to understand the causes and consequences of aggressive behavior. The most important is that parents and children need to learn management of aggression before it gets out of control. Keenan (2002) has reported that children who fail to develop age-appropriate strategies for regulating their aggressive behavior are at high risk for subsequent chronic antisocial and aggressive behavior.

Considering the life-long consequences, management of aggression through social skills training or interpersonal problem solving skills should be given high priority. The lack of interpersonal problem solving skills and also critical, alternative and consequential thinking affect the way in which children handle problems that are encountered with peers and adults. Socially incompetent children when unable to solve their interpersonal problems experience frustration which results in aggressive behaviour. This behavior is most challenging for children, parents and others. Challenging behaviour in children puts them at risk, interfering with their learning, development and success in life. These high-risk children are likely to experience social rejection from peers (Dodge et al., 2003), failure in academic tasks (Dodge et al., 2006), and conflict with teachers (Stormshak et al., 2000). These failure experiences lead the child toward a defensive style of processing information about the social world (Dodge et al., 1990) and disengagement from the mainstream groups in life; including classroom peers, school activities, and parents. Parents may withdraw from interaction with their child to decrease arguments and tension. As the child grows older, there is nobody to supervise the child, and so he or she may become member of deviant peer groups and accelerate antisocial behavior into serious violence (Dodge, et al., 2006). Dishion and Tipsord (2011) reported that children may collectively learn aggression in peer contexts in which “winning” a fight is the dominant problem-solving strategy, and this in turn increases the likelihood of future aggression.

Interpersonal social problem solving skills have important implications for socio-emotional adjustment and social wellbeing of children. Social problem solving approach has potential to decrease, even check more severe behavioural dysfunction including aggression. It is more important “how” children think, that is, the “process” of thinking or problem solving. Children from early years of life can, or learn to, think for themselves and solve every day problems in a successful manner without getting in trouble.

Schools are an important location for interventions to prevent or reduce aggressive behavior. Schools are the place where much interpersonal aggression among children occurs and it is the only setting with almost universal access to children. Hence, the present study was conducted to study the impact of intervention programme on alternative and consequential thinking for anger management in 6-10 year old rural children from government primary schools.

Methodology

Participants: The present study was carried out in two cultural zones of Haryana state- Nardak and Mewat. From each cultural zone, two villages were selected (one for experimental and one for control group). From each village one hundred children in the age group of 6-10 years were selected at random from government primary schools. Total sample constituted of 400 children, 200 in experimental group and 200 in control group. These children were pre-tested for alternative and consequential thinking. If any child did not give any response or said I do not know even after probing twice, that child was excluded from the study to replace that child and another child was selected at random from the list of total children from a particular village.

Measures of Children's Social Problem-Solving Skills: To assess the children's alternative and consequential thinking, two measures were used.

The Social Problem-Solving Test (SPST): Three stories from the Social Problem-Solving Test-Revised developed by Rubin (1988) were used to assess children's interpersonal social problem-solving skills in hypothetical situations with their peers. The characters in the stories wish to gain access to a toy or material in another child's possession. The stories aim to assess children's repertoire of cognitive strategies for obtaining access to an object using non-forceful or forceful strategies. Care was taken that a story character's name was not the same as that of the child being interviewed. The sex of the children in the stories was same as that of the child being interviewed. If the first strategy did not work, the child being tested was asked what the story character would do to solve the problem. Hence, two responses were elicited for each story.

What Happen Next Game (WHNG): This measure developed by Shure and Spivack (1974) was used to assess children's consequential thinking abilities. Three situations were used two involving a child grabbing a toy from another child, and one in which a child has taken something from an adult without asking permission. The child being tested was asked to tell

what might happen next in the situation. Using stick figures and pictures of toys, consequences were elicited by describing a story root to the child being tested. Girls' names were used for girl subjects and boys' names were used for boys' subjects. The sex of the children in the stories was same as that of the child being interviewed.

Scoring of children's responses: Children's responses were quantified. Children's alternative strategies for interpersonal problem solving could either be non-forceful, such as 'please give it to me' or forceful such as 'push him/her off the swing'. Quantitative scores were calculated for each child for alternative use of different strategies for both the responses.

Proportional scores in the use of social problem-solving strategies, non-forceful and forceful in both the responses, were computed. Proportional use of strategies was computed in order to compare the relative use of non-forceful and forceful strategies by children. For example, Non-forceful proportion = $\frac{\text{Total number of non-forceful strategies}}{\text{Total number of non-forceful strategies} + \text{Total number of forceful strategies}}$.

For consequential thinking, total numbers of consequences were computed in three stories. Children could suggest at least three consequences in all the three situations.

Intervention Programme

Intervention programme was planned for anger management through alternative and consequential thinking to reduce use of forceful or aggressive strategies in interpersonal problems. The programme included a series of lessons that teaches children basic skills, problem-solving language and consequential thinking.

The first part of the programme focused upon prerequisite skills necessary for problem solving. To help children understand that there are different ways to solve day to day problems and as a precursor to consequential thinking, the words such as is/is not, same/different, might/might not, if/then were taught through simple statement. Children were also taught about different emotions and were sensitized to emotions of others. They were helped to recognize people's feelings in problem situations.

The second part of the programme included games that focused on alternative and consequential thinking. Children were given hypothetical problem situations and were asked to generate different alternative solutions. Children were asked to evaluate their alternatives and to consider the possible consequences to their decisions. The programme was pre-tested on 6 to 10

year old children before implementation. Intervention programme was imparted to experimental group children with the help of class teachers for a period two months. Post-testing of experimental and control group children was done after a gap of two months.

Results

Pre-testing of experimental and control group Children: Four hundred children, 200 children from control group (one hundred children from each cultural zone) and two hundred children from experimental group (one hundred children from each cultural zone) were pre-tested for alternative and consequential thinking in interpersonal dilemmas. Two alternatives were asked to solve each problem. Means and SDs were computed for proportional use of non-forceful and forceful strategies in first and second response.

As presented in Table 1, there were no significant differences in proportional use of non-forceful and forceful strategies suggested by experimental and control group children. In both the groups, as a first strategy or alternative, children suggested greater proportions of non-forceful strategies and lesser proportions of forceful strategies. In second response, the proportional use of non-forceful strategies decreased and use of forceful strategies increased in both the groups. These results indicate that the most frequently suggested strategies in both the groups were non-forceful strategies such as asking politely, sharing and taking turns. This finding suggests that primary school children are most likely to use non-forceful means to gain access to objects in another child's possession. In the second response, the use of forceful strategies increased indicating that when non-forceful strategy did not work in getting the desired goal, then children are likely to use forceful strategies. There was no difference in number of consequences suggested by children in both the groups.

Table 1

Pre-testing comparison of experimental and control group children

Children's Strategies	Experimental (n= 200) Mean ± SD	Control (n= 200) Mean ± SD	z-value
First Response			
Non-forceful	0.82±0.33	0.81±0.36	0.13 NS
Forceful	0.18±0.09	0.19±0.13	0.11 NS
Second Response			
Non-forceful	0.46±0.19	0.47±0.14	0.16 NS
Forceful	0.54±0.23	0.53±0.25	0.14 NS
Consequences			
Number of consequences	0.33±0.27	0.32±0.26	0.15 NS

Pre and post-testing comparison of experimental and control group children: To assess the impact of intervention programme on alternative and consequential thinking of children, paired-t test was used to compare children’s performance at pre and post-testing stages. Separate analyses were run for experimental and control group children. Means and SDs of proportional use of non-forceful and forceful strategies suggested in first and second response are presented in Table 2. Means of total consequences suggested by experimental and control group children at pre and post-testing stages are also depicted in table.

Table 2

Pre and post-testing comparison of experimental and control group children

Children’s Strategies	Experimental Group (n = 200)			Control Group (n = 200)		
	Pre-testing Mean±SD	Post-testing Mean±SD	Paired t-value	Pre-testing Mean±SD	Post-testing Mean±SD	Paired t-value
First Response						
Non-forceful	0.82±0.33	0.93±0.39	4.46*	0.81±0.36	0.83±0.29	0.59 NS
Forceful	0.18±0.09	0.07±0.02	4.46*	0.19±0.13	0.17±0.10	0.59 NS
Second Response						
Non-forceful	0.46±0.19	0.84±0.22	13.81*	0.47±0.14	0.48±0.17	0.74 NS
Forceful	0.54±0.23	0.16±0.11	13.81*	0.53±0.25	0.52±0.14	0.74 NS
Consequences						
Total consequences	0.33±0.47	2.79±0.62	29.93*	0.32±0.46	0.34±0.47	0.82 NS

As presented in Table 2, experimental group children suggested significantly greater proportions of non-forceful (Mean = 0.93) and lesser proportions of forceful (Mean = 0.07) strategies as a first alternative as compared to pre-testing stage (Means = 0.82 and 0.18 respectively). As a second alternative response also, children suggested significantly greater proportion of positive (Mean = 0.84) and lesser proportion of negative (Mean = 0.16) strategies as compared to pre-testing stage (Means = 0.46 and 0.54 respectively). At post-testing stage experimental group children suggested significantly greater number of consequences (Mean = 2.79) as compared to pre-testing stage (Mean = 0.33). There was no significant difference in performance of control group children at pre and post-testing stages. These results, hence, suggest that exposure to intervention programme enhanced experimental group children’s alternative and consequential thinking.

Post-testing comparison of experimental and control group children: Alternative and consequential thinking of experimental and control group children were compared using z-test. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Post-testing comparison of experimental and control group children

Children's Strategies	Exp group (n= 200) Mean ± SD	Control group (n= 200) Mean ± SD	z-value
First Response			
Non-forceful	0.93±0.39	0.83±0.29	2.95*
Forceful	0.07±0.02	0.17±0.10	2.95*
Second Response			
Non-forceful	0.84±0.22	0.48±0.17	9.85*
Forceful	0.16±0.11	0.52±0.14	9.85*
Consequences			
Total consequences	2.79±0.62	0.34±0.47	29.93*

As shown in Table 3, as a first strategy, experimental group children suggested significantly greater proportions of non-forceful alternatives or strategies (Mean = 0.93) and lesser proportions of forceful strategies (Mean = 0.07) as compared to control group children (Means = 0.83 and 0.17 respectively). Similarly, in the second response as an alternative strategy, experimental group children suggested significantly greater proportions of non-forceful alternatives (Mean = 0.84) and lesser proportions of forceful alternatives (Mean = 0.16) as compared to control group children (Means = 0.48 and 0.52 respectively). It can be interpreted from these results that intervention programme promoted alternative and consequential thinking of experimental group children, while there was no improvement in alternative and consequential thinking of control group children.

Discussion

The results of the present study revealed that the most frequently suggested strategies were non-forceful in nature such as asking politely, sharing and taking turns. This finding suggests that children use non-forceful means to gain access to objects in another child's possession. These findings are highly similar to those found in the previous studies (Rubin & Rose-Krasnor, 1983; Irving, 1994; Balda, 1997; Punia, 2000) which indicated that pro-social strategies were the most frequently used strategies in object acquisition dilemmas. Children learn these socially acceptable strategies from the instructions given by adults, particularly parents at home and teachers at school. They may also learn these strategies by observing adults engaged in pro-social behavior. Teaching children 'how to share', 'wait for their turn', 'to

be polite to others', and 'well-mannered' are skills that can be developed during these years of education. Respecting their peers, playing together and working together in groups and helping one another are all social skills that children are taught in school and at home; however, these skills will help them throughout their life-span.

The second most commonly used strategies in object acquisition dilemmas were forceful strategies. Particularly in the second response, the use of forceful strategies increased when first non-forceful strategy did not work. These findings are consistent with previous research (Rubin & Rose-Krasnor, 1983; Irving, 1994; Balda, 1997; Punia; 2000) which has shown that children are likely to use forceful strategies frequently. Research also (Rubin & Clark, 1983; Rubin & Daniels-Beirness, 1983) indicates that use of agonistic (forceful) strategies is associated with peer rejection and teacher-rated social incompetence.

Results of the present clearly indicated that after exposure to intervention programme use of forceful strategies in hypothetical situations decreased significantly and consequential thinking improved significantly. It can be interpreted from these results that through consequential thinking children were able to see the consequences of using forceful strategies. Hence, after exposure to intervention programme children suggested significantly more non-forceful alternatives as compared to control group children. Results of the present study get support from the findings of previous research. Punia (2002) and Punia et al. (2004) also found that after exposure to intervention programme use of forceful strategies decreased significantly in children from three income groups- low, medium and high.

Van Manen et al. (2004) evaluated the effectiveness of a social cognitive intervention programme for Dutch aggressive boys and found it effective for aggression management. In a more recent study, Sharma (2014) found significant differences in physical, verbal and relational aggression between pre and post-testing stages of experimental group children from rural and urban area of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. After exposure to intervention programme, mean scores of aggressive behaviour decreased significantly indicating that intervention programme is very effective in management of aggressive behaviour.

Khangoli et al. (2014) showed that problem-solving strategies had a significant effect on reducing verbal aggression, physical aggression, hostility, and

anger. Several findings indicated that problem solving skills training reduced aggression and anxiety, increased self-confidence, assertiveness and improved social relations. Support for the present findings were also emerged from the works of Guerra and Slaby (1990), Sukhodolsky et al. (2005) and Bugental et al. (2002). These authors have reported positive effects of social cognitive interventions in reducing hostile attributional biases among aggressive individuals.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that intervention programme has significant impact in the management of aggressive behavior in children. For social wellbeing of children at-risk, it is important to identify aggressive children at an early age. Parents and teachers can also be trained in interpersonal problem-solving programme so that they can help children to think for themselves and to solve their day to day real life problems by themselves in a peaceful manner looking at the consequences of their forceful and aggressive actions. Teacher and parental problem-solving approach will not only help children to develop competency for management of aggressive behavior and improve their interpersonal social problem-solving skills, but also it will help them improve their social behavior with peers and adults. It will develop competencies in children to respond to challenges of life in a positive way.

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Redefining Masculinity through Life skills

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Abstract

Norms that govern masculine behaviors are not always explicit and visible. The 1st step toward challenging gender inequalities is to make masculinities visible and tangible, thereby making men more conscious of gender norms as it affects their own lives and those of women. By focusing on masculinities, the concept of gender becomes visible and relevant for men. In India, making the transition from being a child raised and protected by parents to a self-sufficient young adult has always been an important process. In the past, young people learned the skills and knowledge to make this transition from their parents, relatives and other concerned adults with whom they had a close relationship. Indian society's social fabric has been changing drastically (from multiple member joint families to small size nucleus families, from closely knit village communities to soloed urban/semi urban communities) altering this transition process. It has increasingly become the role of teachers/ youth peer leaders to help young people to learn these necessary life skills. For men and boys life skills have even more important given the gender roles they are expected to get into (express or suppress feelings). Starting with self-awareness and through intra & inter-personal and service learning skills, life skills training has the potential to remove misconceptions around masculinity, liberate men/boys from the burden of socially construed role of being 'real' men/boys and can redefine fundamentally how girls and boys relate to each other. Some of this could be taught via gender-inclusive curricula in the schools and in community based participatory life-skills programmes. This paper provides an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of how a gender inclusive life skills programme will go a long way in addressing violence and issues of rigid masculine norms among youth.

Key words Masculinity, gender, norms, transformation, self-concept, intergenerational dialogue, conflict resolution, violence

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Introduction

In India, every fifth person is an adolescent (10-19 years old) and every third, is a young person (10-24 years old). Investing in this segment of population is the best way to leverage the nation's competitive advantage – its demographic dividend (Census, India 2011). Indian society is on the verge of experiencing a dynamic transformation, but most of the benefits will be tempered with social and spatial inequalities. The increasing violence, discrimination and intolerance against women, girls and LGBT communities has to be addressed through short term redressal mechanisms and long term preventive, community based transformative measures. As most of the violence is perpetuated by men who hold rigid traditional masculine norms, there is an urgent need to demystify and transform traditional gender norms especially rigid masculine norms for youth. This in turn will work as catalyst among the youth in reducing violence and in liberating men themselves from the burden of traditional masculinity which seeks to suppress emotions and build insecurity among men. In spite of the urgency of the situation, it is hardly recognized as a male issue. It is also not given much attention by social agencies working with adolescents, most of which are often preoccupied with the female adolescent's concerns (UNESCO, 2006). Life skills trainings as an instrument in bringing transformative change among adolescents has a crucial role to play both in bringing visibility to the traditional masculine norms, which are hidden and in transforming these norms through skill based engagement.

Masculine norms affecting men

Gender roles limit what both males and females can do in society. Gender norms and behaviors are taught and learned rather than being natural or genetic. While mass culture likes to assume that there is a fixed, true masculinity, in fact, each societal construct of masculinity varies over time and according to culture, age and position within society undergo transformative change. All men, though, while unique individuals, share one thing in common—gender privilege. By virtue of being born male, men are granted access to power, position and resources on a preferential basis to women. These are often assumed, taken for granted and seldom earned (UNICEF, 2006). The concept of hegemonic masculinity promotes the dominant social position of men, and the subordinate social position of women and lesser men (UNESCO, 2006).

However, boys and men do suffer as a result of current male gender roles and gender inequality. When a girl is born, she remains a female all her life. But a boy has to 'earn' his manhood. Meaning, when he grows up, he has to

‘prove’ that he is a man. This is not about biological proof. It is a complex set of expectations that he must fulfil. If he fails to do this, he becomes a ‘lesser’ man. A ‘lesser’ man will have no status in society, no respect, and he will live an undignified life as a disempowered person. In India, we abuse such a person by calling him a *namard* (not a man). Being able to prove that he is a ‘man’ is the foremost pressure on a male adolescent. It is the core of male peer pressure, which is now a recognized adolescent concern (UNESCO, 2006). It is often a matter of life and death for boys/ men and often drive them to violence. Men and boys are under considerable pressure to stick to their gender roles and norms of masculinity, which make it difficult to be different. The male socialization process and social expectations can thus lead to personal insecurities conferred by a failure to make the masculine grade. Even the threat of such failure is enough to generate emotional tension and internal conflict expressed through fear, isolation, anger, self-punishment, self-hatred and aggression in many men. Young males’ self-doubts about their masculine credentials negatively impact their self-esteem (UNICEF, 2006). They may feel that they do not live up to the societal construct of masculinity. Subsequent feelings of rejection and failure can lead to an unhealthy self-image and result in anti-social behaviors, including violence.

Deviation in masculine behaviors are punished

When a child engages in behavior or does something that is more often associated with the opposite sex, this is referred to as crossing gender borders. When gender borders are crossed in adolescence, the children are regulated by themselves. Conflicts and disagreements between boys are resolved by name-calling and teasing, physical aggression, and exclusion from the group. This brings confusion to the natural order of building their individualism, and stifles their creativity and freer play, critical to developing lifelong skills in problem solving and decision making. Boys who fail to fit the social norm are forced to enter adolescence having experienced alienation from their social group and marginalized from the social order they strive to achieve in this stage of life.

As adolescence approaches which marks the beginning of adulthood, hegemonic masculinity positions some boys, and all girls, as subordinate or inferior to others. Bullying is one avenue in which young men assert their dominance over less “masculine” boys. In this bullying schema, adolescent boys are motivated to be at the top of the scale by engaging in more risk taking activities as well. Often times bullying is motivated by social constructs and

generalized ideas of what a young man should be.

Gender based socialization in formative years

Children learn at a very early age what it means to be a boy or a girl in our society. Through a myriad of activities, opportunities, encouragements, discouragements, overt behaviors, covert suggestions, and various forms of guidance, children experience the process of gender role socialization. It is difficult for a child to grow to adulthood without experiencing some form of gender bias or stereotyping, whether it be the expectation that boys are better than girls at math or playing football/cricket or the idea that only females can nurture children (Brown, 2004). Men/boys past experiences in childhood have a significant impact on their masculine behavior as adults. The more men witnessed their father making more decisions in their formative years they are less likely to have equitable gender attitudes. Men who had often witnessed some violent acts or discrimination against their sisters or mothers in their childhood internalize this experience to be more rigidly masculine. In many of the studies done in India the proportion of rigidly masculine men is higher amongst those men who experienced discrimination as children compared to those who did not. Men feel intense demands to uphold gender norms (e.g. appear strong, maintain control). On the aggregate men who were rigidly masculine were thrice more likely to perpetrate physical violence than equitable men (UNFPA, 2014).

Role of life skills in transforming masculine norms

In India, making the transition from being a child raised and protected by parents to a self-sufficient young adult has always been an important process. In the past, young people learned the skills and knowledge to make this transition from their parents, relatives, neighbors, and other concerned adults with whom they had a close intimate relationship. During the last 50 years, Indian society's social fabric has changed drastically (from multiple member joint families to small size nucleus families, from closely knit village communities to soloed urban/semi urban communities) which altered this transition process. Young people are spending less time in close proximity with the concerned adults. It has increasingly become the role of teachers and youth workers to help young people learn these necessary social and life skills. For men and boys internalising life skills is more important given the gender roles they are in and the ways they are expected to be aggressive and express or suppress feelings. Starting with becoming aware of the self, Life skills training has the potential to remove misconceptions around masculinity and liberate them from the burden of the socially construed role

of being ‘real’ men and boys. The Life skills can also change fundamentally how girls and boys learn to relate to each other, and how men treat girls and women. Some of this could be taught via gender-inclusive curricula (rather than gender-biased curricula) in the schools and in community based participatory life-skills programmes, from which both sexes would benefit. While on the one hand boys will welcome any conversation which will help them to understand, relate and address the burden of masculine norms they face in their lives, they will resist any approach that they perceive to be judgmental and negative, approaches that aim to “fix” them. Including men and boys in the conversation requires a focus on their positive attributes and contributions as well as on what they aspire to be in life, which involves them, where they see the benefit of their transformation (social incentives) (Witt, 1997). There are several concrete steps one can identify in designing gender inclusive curricula, but the discussion should initiate with the discussion on existing gender and stereotypes and their transformation.

Gender stereotypes and boys

Gender may seem simple, but the myths surrounding this concept mask its true complexity. Experts who work with youth and gender issues tell us the two most common myths are these: First, gender is binary, offering only two options; second, gender and sex are the same thing. Summed up, the myth goes like this: Every person is either male or female, and the distinction is based on that person’s anatomy. Even when teaching gender stereotypes, the reference is often only confined to male and female. The discussion around masculinity/femininity often doesn’t include questions around “lesser” men and social norms around patriarchy. Violence perpetuated by men with rigid masculinities cannot be made visible if the discussion is confined to only male and female. It is not just women who face violence; the victims are often men themselves and the marginalized communities. There is overwhelming silence about the role of gender and sexuality in the construction of identities. The identity of being women/men or girls/boys is taken for granted as a fixed natural endowment that corresponds with being female or male. Thus, being female is gendered as feminine and polarized against the masculine. Such assumptions tend to divert attention from the fact that human beings are continually producing and reproducing themselves as particular women/men or girls/boys in different social contexts (Wandera, 2007).

Making masculinities visible

The first step toward challenging gender inequalities is to make masculinities visible and thereby make men more conscious of gender as it affects

their lives and those of women. By focusing on masculinities, the concept of gender becomes visible to and relevant for men, which is currently a grey area. One of the key forces for change, for example, is the development of an understanding of power dynamics in relationships—dynamics that are often invisible or unanalyzed by men. There is an acute need for men to be aware of the invisible norms which are governing and affecting them, emanating from the patriarchal societal norms. The conversation can be initiated through discussion around expectations from men/boys in different societies. Here is a list of expectations from a person because he happens to be a man/boy in India (UNESCO, 2006)

- ◆ Men are expected to be strong, aggressive, tall, handsome, bold, courageous, rough, tough, emotionless, insensitive, fearless and practical. They should not be soft, submissive or weak.
- ◆ They are not supposed to have weaknesses or vulnerabilities. They must not show feelings as these would make them appear weak or vulnerable.
- ◆ They should always be prepared to fight their way. They should never retreat from a physical fight. Others should fear them. They should physically defend their family and work hard to earn to support it. They should choose careers considered ‘manly’ – engineers, doctors, military, managers, etc.
- ◆ A real man is expected to have hobbies such as smoking, drinking, fast driving, chasing girls, and playing outdoor sports like cricket, football, etc. They should not have ‘girlie’ hobbies like cooking, decorating, sewing, dancing, etc.
- ◆ A real man should be able to satisfy women and should be aggressive in the sexual act
- ◆ Don’t cry, don’t feel pain, are not shy and Hit their women (wife or girlfriend)
- ◆ Are not ‘beautiful’, but are ‘smart’

These messages are transmitted to adolescents explicitly and implicitly (not visible), from time to time, especially when we are growing up. Many of the expectations boys have on girls and girls’ attitudes are not visible/explicate enough to be discussed. For example from the data from the project for addressing gender based discrimination project in Haryana (JPAL 2014) shows the need for visibility of attitudes and underlying patriarchal norms. After the analysis of the data, once the correlation was drawn, the urgent need for addressing the issue become evident.

Addressing self-concept and self-esteem

Once the understanding on gender and masculinities, as it affects them is

unrevealed, the next logical step is to look at the concept of self itself. Self-concept is an individual's perception of self, including self-esteem, body image, and ideal self. A person's self-concept is often defined by self-description such as "I am a student, a brother, and a volunteer." A child's burgeoning sense of self, or self-concept, is a result of the multitude of ideas, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs that he or she is exposed to. The information that surrounds the child and which the child internalizes comes to the child within the family arena through parent child interactions, role modeling, reinforcement for desired behaviors, and parental approval or disapproval. In the exploration of the self, often issues of masculinity are not probed (or options given). In the event of contradiction of boys' natural strengths / weaknesses with the socially construed masculine norms, they are forced to wear a mask for fear of being ostracized, which in turn affects their self-esteem. A comprehensive exploration of self-concept can be achieved through the continuation of discussion of gender moving into strengths and weaknesses with all the options: occupational, behavioral, sexual, including the avenues which are traditionally assigned to feminine gender. A study by Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, and Caspi (2005) found that boys with low self-esteem tend to resemble the behaviors of boys with narcissism in their level of aggression and acting out (Hendel, 2006). Boys with low self-esteem are drawn to peers with negative behaviors and try to increase their level of belonging and fitting in by externalizing their feelings through negative behaviors. When intervening, it is important to pay attention to the signs of low self-esteem. Low self-esteem affects many areas of mental health and it is important to be aware of signs of poor self-concept and to pay attention to how boys do express their feelings. The more aware you are of any emotional or behavioral changes and the common and not so common signs, the more help you can offer to them, but this knowledge is not meant to be used as an excuse. Girls are generally more social and are able to get some of those emotional needs met through other people, but boys are discouraged from expressing emotions and do not seek out others in an appropriate manner to get these needs met.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the gender inclusive Life skills programme can play a crucial role in bringing visibility to the gender based discrimination, masculine norms and in addressing violence. The life skills programme has the potential to liberate men from the rigid masculine norms, transforming them to a more equitable type of masculinity. Masculinity has to be included in any life skills programmes which deal with violence and men. Several programme though

not strictly life skills have explored masculinities, men and boys and their transformation.

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A Study on Perception of Communities for Effectiveness of Life Skill Education (LSE) for promoting Adolescent Reproductive & Sexual Health (ARSH) among Tribes of Odisha

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Abstract

Adolescence (10-19 Years) is a vital stage of growth and development. It is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood and is marked by rapid physical, physiological and psychological changes. Adolescence is a period of rapid development during which young people acquire new capacities and are faced with many new situations. This period results in sexual, psychological and behavioral maturation. This study describes the knowledge, attitude and practices of adolescents in tribal dominated districts in Odisha and the perception of community members towards Life Skills Education (LSE). The study was conducted among 10 districts of Odisha with 5 villages in each district. In each village around 10 community members were interviewed. The members include SMC members of schools, PRI members in villages and other influential people related to different developmental activities in the area. In total 500 respondents data were collected through AEP approved LSE-ARSH data collection schedule. A quantitative single cross sectional research design was adopted to analyze the collected information. The data were analyzed through statistical packages with regression model and presentation of information. The outcome of research study on knowledge showed with changing information and mobile technology the knowledge level also increases on ARSH issues. Around 87% of the community members agree to the concept of adopting LSE along with main stream education to promote ARSH issues among the adolescents.

Key words: Life Skill Education, Adolescent issues, Reproductive sexual health

Introduction

Approximately one billion youth live in the world today. Almost 85% live in developing nations, with 60% in Asia alone. The youth population in the developing countries will increase to 89.5% by 2025. In the Indian context,

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almost 23% of the population consists of young people in the age group 13-24 years (Rwenge, M, 2000). Therefore it is imperative that youth related issues form an integral part of the development programmes and policies at the national and international level. Adolescents are a diverse group and are in varying situations of risk, status and environments. For example, they could be married or unmarried, in-school or out-of-school, living in urban or rural areas or have a different sexual orientation. During adolescence, hormonal changes lead to onset of puberty, sudden and rapid physical growth and development of secondary sexual characteristics. Psychological and emotional changes like assertion of self identity and independence, sex drive, and attraction towards the opposite sex take place simultaneously. Adolescents begin extending their relationships beyond the family. They feel an inclination for distancing themselves from parents and expanding their social circle to carve an important place amongst peers.

The idea of reproductive rights is inherent to the definition of reproductive health, and these rights are integral to globally recognized human rights. Within the framework of human rights established and accepted by the global community, certain rights are particularly relevant to adolescents and the opportunities and risks they face. These include gender equality and the rights to education and health, including Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (ARSH) information and services appropriate to their age, capacity and circumstance. Actions to ensure implementation of these rights can have tremendous practical benefits: empowering individuals, ensuring well-being, stemming the Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) pandemic and alleviating poverty and improving socioeconomic prospects. Adolescent student population constitutes a significant part of the total strength of the institution. These adolescents face various obstacles in accessing the services, one of which is receiving accurate information regarding reproductive and sexual health. In addition, adolescents are often not aware of adolescent-friendly sources of care, which combined with their limited knowledge hinders their ability to make informed choices to protect and promote their own well-being.

Background

It is very important to arm young people with the right information at the right age and equip them with skills that will help them make informed decisions. However, doing this is challenging in view of the cultural restrictions and social taboo on sex that exist in many countries including India.

Many developed countries conduct Family Life Education or Sex Education

for adolescents in schools to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to develop a healthy understanding and lifestyle. Sex education, which is sometimes called sexuality education or sex and relationships education, is the process of acquiring information and forming attitudes and beliefs about sex, sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. It is also about developing young people's skills so that they make informed choices about their behavior, and feel confident and competent about acting on these choices. It is widely accepted that young people have a right to sex education, because it is a means by which they are helped to protect themselves against abuse, exploitation, unintended pregnancies, and sexually transmitted diseases.

Efforts are being made by public and private sector to reduce disparities of opportunities for education among tribal adolescents. Access to formal education system is being increased mainly through residential schools of the government. Only a few private institutions have taken initiative to open residential schools for tribal adolescents to improve access and address issues of equity. Though age at marriage is increasing; data from NFHS-3 (National Family Health Survey 3) shows that 27% young women and 3% young men in the age group of 15-19 year were married at the time of the survey (2005-06)

Objectives of study

The study was conducted to understand the community perception on use of LSE tool for promoting ARSH among tribes. To find the level of awareness on use of LSE and ARSH among tribes in Odisha. To assess the Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) on Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health among tribal and suggest enabling environment for undertaking LSE activities in the tribal communities for promoting ARSH and a safe adulthood.

Methodology and Coverage

The study was conducted in selected tribal dominated districts of Odisha. The districts were chosen randomly and within the district randomly the blocks and villages were selected. 500 respondents were also selected randomly from 40 villages in 4 districts of Odisha. Random sampling method was applied so that the selection procedure is equivalent to selection with probability proportional to size. Systematic samples of adolescents household were then selected from each of the group in which all available ones were selected for sample. The respondents were categorized by the age of the adolescents as early, mid and late adolescent so that all type of respon-

dents would be covered. We took proportionate male and female ratio in order to have the unbiased gender data from the population.

Systematic steps were followed while designing the tools, with adequate consultation and review of literature in this regard. Based on the need one set of questionnaires were developed to assess the LSE & ARSH domains of tribal students. To study health care awareness and early adolescent adaptability features, the LSE and ARSH questionnaire was framed in such a way that behavior, attitude and adolescent characteristic may reflect in the output of the report. Effort was made to find out the community awareness and how their father or mother guided them in their life. The study also focuses on the neighbours of the adolescent families in the tribal community. Around 500 interviews were conducted by the trained KISS students in their locality.

Findings and discussion

The study was conducted in the tribal dominated districts of Odisha. The age of the respondents vary from 22 years to more than 50 years. Respondents are predominantly illiterate and their knowledge of life skill education and awareness on reproductive health are low in the households. The occupations of the respondents are more as farmers or casual laborers in the informal sector. Around 39% of the respondents are dependent on cultivation and 30% of them are labourers either daily or working in casual sector. The level of income with this occupation may not be sufficient to make better hygiene practices for the early adolescent girls in the household. Around 87% of the respondents are married, which shows the maturity of feedback received from the respondents. The relationships of respondents with the adolescent in the household are dominantly of son, grandson, daughter, and granddaughters.

There are many tribe and sub tribe system in Odisha and more than 14 type of tribe sub groups are prevalent in Orissa. In our study we found out that Kandha have the major share of 20.3% of the respondents in the study area. As a process of biological phenomenon the process of menstruation start during the age of 12-13 years of a girl. It is evident from our data that around 26.8% of the respondent have responded that it starts in the age of 12-13 years. 15% of the respondents had early menstrual period and 5% of the respondents told it happened late during 15 years of age. It is evident that any physical change in the human being should be accompanied by mental and behavioral change in a continuum basis. Around 86% of the respondents have agreed that there is change in the behavior and attitude

among the girls. It is evident that when we are staying in the community any change in the physical and behavioral aspects of girl in the household will invite some remarks by the outsiders. It is observed that around 13% of the respondent says to get married soon and 4% advice do not attend any function during this period for the girls. 44.4% of respondents give good advice to continue their education. The expectation of the girls is to become a good human being and take care of the father and mother. They want to continue higher education and become ideal person for the society to serve the nation and to marry a good person and take care of the family with children to live an ideal life.

Around 79% of the respondents have agreed that there is change in the behavior and attitude seen among the boys. It is evident that when we are staying in the community any change in the physical and behavioral aspects of boys in the household will cause some remark by the outsiders. It is observed that around 18.6% of the respondent says to get married soon and 9.3% advice to attend village meeting and responsible activity and 33.7% of respondents give good advice to take care of the responsibility of the family members and start earning. The expectations of the boys are to become a good human being and take care of the parents with good earning .Also to have good education and become an ideal person in the society to serve the nation.

In the changing and growing phase of the human life, adolescents in the tribal area face many diseases. Our study shows that disease due to drug addiction is 47.8% and RTI/STD vulnerability is around 17% respectively. HIV/AIDS which is considered to be the most deadly affected disease may constitute 17.4% in the community.

When there is a very high chance of getting into risk behavior in this growing age, it becomes a major concern for the household to take action as and when it occurs. Around 72.2% of the respondents have asked to go to hospital for the doctor's consultation and 12.4% may take the home remedy as one of the option for this activity. Around 57.45% of the respondent will study the environment before taking any step, 28.7% may take the help of the health professionals for any kind of major happenings and looking at the society involvement .7.4% may suppress the matter for not getting bad name in the society and community. Most of the respondents told the average age for the marriage according to law is 25 years, highest age of marriage is 30 and lowest when marriage should happen may be 18 years.

A very fundamental question to the community on the vulnerability of HIV/AIDS, around 82.4% of the respondents have told sexual relationship with affected partner may lead to this disease, 81.3% of respondent told that children get it during birth from the infected mother and 4.4% remarked mosquito bite may be one of the reasons for this. Although the awareness level on this epidemic is very high among tribes, but few misconceptions are there among them which may be taken up during LSE activity to these community. A very fundamental question to the community on the vulnerability of HIV/AIDS medicine, around 58% of the respondents have told there is no medicine but rest suggested there are medicines for this disease. A very fundamental question to the community on the vulnerability of STD/RTI medicine, around 26% of the respondents have told there is no medicine but rest suggested there are medicines for this disease.

Human beings are influenced by others in all the process of development starting from birth to old age. Mother or care taker helps child in learning. Our study shows that 65.4% of adolescents are influenced by friends, 57.2% are influenced by Television, 43.9% get knowledge from advertisements and 42.3% receive knowledge through relatives. The bad habits of early adolescents are very prominent among tribes, where alcohol with friends, drugs, traditional addictions and tobacco habits are some of the prominent features. Hence young people in these communities need some curriculum based awareness education during their adolescence. Around 90% of respondents agreed that it should be included in the curriculum. Around 84% of respondent agreed that it should be included in the LSE programme for generating awareness. Whenever adolescents realise that they are at risk and show interest, that is the right time to intervene in the community with any program based learning. Around 37% of respondents told school based learning may be most effective for this program and health workers in the village may lead some of the ARSH program for the adolescents.

Conclusion

Adolescents knowledge, skills and practice are not adequate in the domain of ARSH areas such as cleanliness, expressing physical problem, consulting with others, awareness of disease, gender rights, prejudices, pregnancy age, sex stereo-type, discrimination, substance abuse and hygienic practice,. The tribal adolescents try to be independent in this growing age which may lead to confusion and unhappiness in decision making process. Sometimes this unhappiness or confused state may lead to domestic violence and non expression of internal feelings to the parents. About life matters, father played

a major role in education and studies, knowledge on outside world, national and international activity and aspiration of life. Mother helps to understand way of life and relationship building. Friends play a major role in outside amusements like entertainment, TV watching, discussion of change in body parts and love with romance activities.

There should be some steps, medium and long term vision to promote ARSH for the tribal adolescents. Systematic and step by step intervention programs should be organized. Subject specific teaching and learning approach should be applied as part of LSE approach to promote ARSH activity so that maximization of the community learning may happen. Whatever approach tested in order to make LSE a close success in KISS, should also be promoted in a simulated manner all over Odisha. Since all the adolescents are vulnerable towards sexual and reproductive problems in that age. LSE promoting ARSH should be encouraged to a larger extent by taking Anganwady workers, ASHA and education system into consideration in order to have a better community approach.

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“Capabilities Approach” - Perspectives and Framework for Building Reproductive Sexual Health Capabilities/Assets among Adolescents Girls

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Abstract

Adolescent reproductive health is an important area of concern for health workers. Part of the importance arises due to the number of adolescents in India and world. Many studies reveal that adolescents in various parts of India lack the information and skills needed to make responsible sexual behavior and decisions. In order to deal with these situations several schemes have been launched by the Government to reach the adolescents girls and deal with their reproductive and sexual needs accordingly.

This paper gives a brief overview of the importance of health assets/ capabilities to adolescent girls as well as laying out the different ways, from which they can acquire, retain control or lose these capabilities. This paper serves as a tool for discussion to understand Sen (1993) capabilities approach with the agenda to transact and develop adolescent reproductive sexual health (ARSH) capacities among adolescent girls. The paper is divided into three parts: the first part outlines the components of adolescents and need to invest in adolescents in regards to ARSH capacities and the profile of adolescent population in India. The second part is dedicated to an understanding on the capabilities approach with a lens of improving the ARSH capabilities among adolescent girls. The paper concludes with by discussing on the SABLA scheme and its correlation with the capabilities approach in order to reach the health needs with respect to reproductive sexual health of the adolescent girls.

Key words: Adolescents, capacity building, health capabilities/ assets

Introduction

The adolescent population in a society constitute a critical segment as the future demographic, social, economic and political developments of the entire population is depending on them. The question that arises is what must we do to improve and maintain the health of 20.9 percent of India's popula-

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tion viz, the adolescents (10-19 yrs)? There might be several answers to this question, but there is a need to understand and cull out a strategy for building a comprehensive programme keeping in mind the health capabilities of adolescents.

Who are the adolescents ?

Adolescents can be termed as persons in the age group of 10-19 years and are characterised by their transitional phase. It is widely accepted that adolescence is the time of transition involving multi-dimensional changes: biological, psychological (including cognitive) and social. Though adolescence is often viewed as a developmental stage unto itself, there exist several stages of development within, that are important to explore, especially as they relate to design and implementation of programmes targeting this population.

India is known as the youngest country in the world and this demographic dividend can be utilized as an asset in order to deal with several issues existing today. India today has adolescent population of 231.9 million which is 20.9 percent of the total population of the country.

Need to invest in adolescent for developing health capabilities

The sustainable development goals provide us with indicators that need to be kept in mind in order to lead towards being a developed nation. Today India might have reached a level higher from the low income groups to the low middle income groups. But still development indicators are not very encouraging. Further it is interesting to understand that the development of the adolescents will have a direct impact in meeting the sustainable development goals (SDG) as enunciated by the United Nations. Four out of the seventeen goals in the SDG's have a direct impact on the adolescent population. Among which improving health indicators among adolescent girls play a very vital role.

The adolescent and youth population determines the present and future human resource of a nation. Investing adequately on their health and education will transform these resources into human capital. In this paper the researcher discusses the health aspect and especially the adolescent reproductive sexual health issues and the capabilities associated with it.

When we try and understand the components of “adolescent reproductive health capabilities” it is useful to understand the components that would be important in many cultures. These include the following:

- ◆ Prior to puberty, information about the physical and emotional changes that take place as adolescents proceed through puberty.

- ◆ Information about the factual aspects of human sexuality, including reasons to delay intercourse and use condoms or other forms of contraception.
- ◆ Clear and consistent statements of their parents' and society's values about relationships, sexual intimacy, intercourse, planning families, preventing sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and using condoms and other forms of contraception.
- ◆ Clear statements of the positive, healthful, and meaningful aspects of human sexuality, as well as the negative consequences of some sexual behaviors.
- ◆ Instruction and practice on how to make sexual and contraceptive decisions consistent with their values and goals and how to effectively communicate these decisions to others.
- ◆ Whether married or unmarried, access to convenient, confidential, and low-cost methods of obtaining condoms and other forms of contraception.
- ◆ Whether married or unmarried, access to other convenient, confidential, and low-cost reproductive health services, such as gynecological test, counseling, STD tests, and other tests.

Conceptual framework linking Health, capabilities and wellbeing among adolescents

The conceptual framework adopted for the paper is the Sen(1993) capabilities approach. The core characteristic of the capability approach is its focus on what people are effectively able to do and to be; that is, on their capabilities. In relation to the development of the ARSH capabilities among adolescents, this is what we desire to achieve, i.e. they practice what they learn. In the context of improving reproductive sexual health capabilities among adolescents, we need to consider two important concepts introduced by Sen. These are functioning and capabilities, concepts that are related but nevertheless distinct.

Functioning refers to the set of things one does in his/her life; what one manages to do and to be. Taken altogether, functioning are achievements that make a life valuable. They range from basic achievements such as being well-nourished and disease-free, informed about one's own body to more complex and volatile ones such as taking part in community life or having self-respect (Sen, 1992).

On the other hand, capabilities are alternative combinations of functioning that a person can choose from. They are equivalent with the real opportunities a person has and among which he/she can choose, thus incorporating

the idea of freedom, which Sen identifies as agency - one's ability to pursue goals that one values (Robeyns, 2003).

To summarize, functioning is an achievement, whereas capability is the ability to achieve. In the context of the paper the functioning is dealing with the health needs and issues among adolescents and capability that is acquired through various programming is the ability to achieve.

Enumerating on ARSH capabilities, it include knowledge, skills and attitudes, which further moves on to be assets of adolescent girls. The key importance is to know the influencing health behaviors and outcomes, which are factors in the environment surrounding the girl (culture, social norms, economic constrains, barriers to access) that influence choice and functioning. In other words, it is how girls are able to put knowledge and skills into action. Thus when we intend to improve girls' health, knowledge, skill and status, we need to keep in mind the situation of girls in mind.

SABLA Scheme to enable investment in Health capabilities/assets among Adolescent girls

The SABLA Scheme aims at the overall development of the adolescent girls in 200 districts of India. The scheme caters to both the nutrition and non-nutrition needs of the adolescent girls. One important component of the scheme is related to adolescent health issues and in particular adolescent reproductive sexual health. The key services provided and strategies to transact the services are:

- ◆ **SABLA Programme and its efforts to build health capabilities among adolescent girls**
 - Nutrition and Health Education
 - Quarterly Adolescent Health Day
 - Life Skills Education
 - Family life Education
 - Adolescent Reproductive and sexual health
- ◆ **Various strategies that are involved to transact the Scheme**
 - Adolescent groups at the Anganwadi center
 - Peer educators
 - Involvement of peer educators and volunteers in the MCHN Days.
 - Involvement of family and community on the adolescent health day

Limitations in using capabilities approach for enhancing health capabilities among adolescent girls

The ARSH component in the SABLA Scheme is being implemented using

many innovative methods, but they are facing many limitations; important among them are:

1. The actual impact of programs aiming at enhancing capabilities related to ARSH is difficult to evaluate, as it is based on qualitative indicators.
2. The level of understanding and skills to transact the aforesaid capabilities among the field level functionaries, who are responsible for the intervention with the adolescents.
3. Reaching and retaining the adolescent girls for the sessions

Initiatives taken to meet the challenges

Keeping in mind the limitations in implementing the SABLA scheme the following activities and strategies were undertaken in the State of Rajasthan–

1. In order to evaluate the scheme a rapid assessment on the scheme was done in the year 2014, after 3 years of implementation of the programme. Further efforts are being done by the DWCD, to collect and document success stories from each district. Further all the ten districts are to come up with their district specific newsletters, which will reflect several initiatives at the block and village level.
2. Trainings and capacity building have been conducted at district, block and village level functionaries on issues and concerns related to adolescent development and ARSH is part of the entire process.
3. Quarterly analysis of the monthly progress report and communication is given to the districts on the areas that require special attention.
4. Several Training aids have been developed to facilitate the sessions that have been conducted with the adolescent girls. The materials includes two detailed training module on several issues concerning adolescent development. Some of the aids on health, reproductive sexual health and life skills are – Phud, Apron explaining the menstruation and the cycle, playing cards with information on ARSH and other health related issues, Snakes and ladder game with issues related to various aspects of physical changes and health of an adolescent.
5. In order to ensure retention of the adolescent girls, the parents and guardians are involved in the quarterly health day, house visits have been done by the Anganwadi worker and Sathin (gram panchayat level worker) to ensure their participation.
6. SABLA scheme is an inter-departmental scheme, which involves services from three major departments, Medical Health and Family

Welfare, Education and Women and Child. Thus in order to strengthen the institutional support from all the three departments, a convergence meeting was organized under the chairmanship of Additional Chief Secretary DWCD. As a result of the meeting the respective departments have issued guidelines to their field level functionaries to provide services under the scheme.

Sharing by Adolescent Girls

The initiatives have brought about a kindle of thought among the adolescent girls in the rural Rajasthan on the practices which are being followed from ages. The sessions conducted by the Anganwadi worker or ASHA- health worker at the Anganwadi level for the adolescent girls have initiated discussions and debates among them. On interaction with them in several levels adolescent girls have shared that they were not aware on several myths which are present in the society. Among which sharing of two girls will be discussed below -

Manju (name changed) and her friends from a district in Rajasthan were attending a session on menstruation and menstrual hygiene at the Anganwadi center. During the discussion it was shared that, pickles get spoilt if touched during periods. The health worker, initiated an experiment with the adolescent girls. She asked them to keep aside some pickle in a jar with adequate oil in it and asked them to be careful to not touch with wet hands or keep a spoon in. Then asked the girls to touch and serve the pickle when they are having periods. After four months Manju came up to the center and shared with all the girls that she had done as the health worker had asked to, and the pickle had not got spoilt. She was assured that it is just a myth and we should tell others also. In her words – “I am convinced, now my task is to convince my mother that this is a myth”

Secondly, Parul and her friends from the Kishori Samooh in Rajasthan, attended Kishori Divas (Quarterly health Day) where a session was conducted on various infections and diseases (UTI's) by the Medical officer and ANM. When the ANM asked the girls how many of you feel burning sensation while passing urine, almost all of them put their hands up. Then as they were explaining on the various types, the girls were relating it to themselves and at the end of the session they were surprised to know that almost sixty percent of them were suffering from UTI's. The ANM gave the respective medicines and referred them ahead also. At the end of the session Parul shared that “I thought after getting periods, all experience burning sensation while passing urine, I was surprised to know that it's an infection. I will be careful from now on”

Discussion and Conclusion

The cases described clearly states the lack of knowledge and prevalence of myths among the adolescent girls. Thus sessions designed under the capabilities approached aim at not only imparting knowledge but also developing the application of this knowledge as skills and finally they being the health assets of the adolescent girls. These health assets/ capabilities will be along with the girls for a long time. This not only renders to their needs but also the needs of the others in the family.

Thus the need of the health capabilities is understood but prior to selecting the content of the programme, there are a few things that have to kept in mind –

- ◆ What is the existing knowledge on ARSH among adolescent girls?
- ◆ Which are the major areas that need to cover among the girls under ARSH?
- ◆ Identify the skills that are required to deal with issues and concerns related to ARSH?
- ◆ Are we providing information according to the needs of the adolescent girls?

Constant review is required to get desired results. Other steps that need to be taken to reach the desired outcome are:

1. Review and disseminate evaluation results for effective implementation further
2. And improve internal and inter departmental linkages, support and coordination among the departments
3. Generate awareness among the adolescents on the various schemes and programmes available for them.
4. Explore and experiment various new strategies and programming for implementing the capability approach and enhancing capabilities on ARSH among adolescents

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Approaches and strategies for effective implementation of Life Skills Education

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Abstract

“Skills have become the global currency of the 21st century, but this currency can depreciate if it isn’t used” said Andreas Schleicher, Deputy Director for Education at the OECD Forum (25 May 2012). There is a growing, national understanding of the importance of developing psychosocial skills to help individuals excel in school, college and all spheres to successfully navigate through life’s challenges. Recognising the need for skill development, the Government of India has adopted skill development as a national priority and introduced life skills in the education realm to create a skilled and competent work force that is not only employable but also empowered. Provisions of multiple opportunities for ongoing skill development and practise are being programmed at all levels and in a variety of contexts.

Life skills approach is a comprehensive, multi-strategy approach, aiming at effectively bringing desired positive behaviours in individuals through the transfer of appropriate knowledge, skills, values and attitude in the learner. The goal of this approach is to promote healthy, sociable behaviour and to prevent or reduce risk behaviours, as well as to make an impact on knowledge and attitudinal components. Nationwide network of high quality life skills training providers and assessment agencies have been doing their part providing life skills education to enhance Human Capital through Capacity Building, Preventive and/or Resiliency approaches. Life Skills program initiatives in India have taken a “Life Span Approach” to empower different strata of society. However, the task of imbibing life skills and actually transforming lives, still remain as a major concern. New methods and strategies have given rise to new approaches in evangelising life skills education.

This paper discusses some of the on-going life skills education approaches and strategies carried out and the best practices followed. The various models will be critically examined to ensure whether a holistic and multi-strategy approach is being followed to bring about sustainable development.

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Introduction

Knowledge and skills are increasingly important for an individual's growth as well as a source of wealth at all levels of an economy. The term "knowledge economy" is used to describe an economic structure where, "Economic success is increasingly based upon the effective utilisation of intangible assets such as knowledge, skills and innovative potential as the key resource for competitive advantage (ESRC, 2005). In India 2020: A Vision for the New Millennium Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam (2002) stressed the importance of knowledge and ways to facilitate India's transition to the knowledge economy. There is a growing awareness in India that the knowledge economy means more than having strong IT and high-tech industries. "Skills have become the global currency of the 21st century, but this currency can depreciate if it isn't used" said Andreas Schleicher, Deputy Director for Education at the OECD Forum (25 May 2012). Skills transform lives and drives economies. Proper investment, utilisation and up gradation of skills is required to keep in tune with the dynamic changing times of globalisation. Keeping in mind that India has a young population, capitalising on skill development, strengthening it and continuously upgrading the skills of the working population is imperative. The most crucial task India faces, is equipping its ever-increasing youth with education and appropriate skill training. To reap the benefits of the demographic dividend and make it meaningful, apart from making education as a basic right available to all, appropriate skill building and skill enhancement needs to be the focus that will ensure gainful employment leading to an improved and empowered skilled human and social capital. Recognising the need for skill development, the Government of India has adopted skill development as a national priority for the next 10 years and since 2008 has formed Skill Development Missions, both at the National and State level. The National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC) has been entrusted with the challenge to impart skills to 500 million Indian people by 2022 through training programs.

The World Bank (2010) STEP framework Skills Towards Employment and Productivity is a helpful model explaining how a sequenced combination of education, training and labour market activities can contribute towards increased productivity and economic growth. The foundation of the model is good quality basic education (including generic employability skills such as literacy, numeracy and communications), which is then followed by job-relevant skills, encouragement of entrepreneurship and innovation, and facilitation of labour mobility and job-matching. It also promotes the concept of Lifelong Learning, with skills continuing to be acquired throughout a

person's lifetime. It is evident that India can do much more to leverage its strengths in today's knowledge-based global economy.

The challenge India faces is “unemployability” more than just unemployment. It is a known fact that having educational qualifications alone, are not sufficient to get a job and sustain in it. Requisite skill sets are of prime importance to compete in the world of work and life. There is a gap which is widening today between qualified students coming out of universities/ colleges/ institutions and their ability to fit to the right jobs and careers. Unfortunately, they cannot be considered for gainful employment due to their unsuitability in terms of their competencies. Individuals must be equipped with the required psychosocial competencies to steer life forward and balance the three areas- knowledge, attitude and practice to create a productive, sustainable and inclusive future. This is where the role of Life Skills Education comes into play.

Life Skills are not new and has been in existence since human civilization began. People have innate life skills but in the recent times, its conscious use and practice has become vital to exercise self management and be a productive member of society. There is a growing, national understanding of the importance of enhancing Life Skills, in individuals to help them excel in school, college, work and all spheres to successfully navigate through life's challenges. Thanks to the enormous body of research from the west, India and other Asian countries that have given an impetus to the growth of Life Skills Education. However, the task of imbibing life skills and actually transforming lives, still remains a major concern. The reason being, there still seems to be ambiguity in “What Is Life Skills?” and “How it is being imparted to the masses?”

This paper discusses some of the life skills education approaches and strategies carried out and the best practices followed. The various models followed are explored citing suitable examples to illustrate the same. The answers to the following questions are discussed.

- ◆ What is Life Skills Education?
- ◆ What are the life skills approaches that are being followed? Which are the strategies adopted?
- ◆ Are there any new approaches?

Life Skills & Life Skills Education

Life Skills are psycho social skills that enable individuals to thrive and succeed in today's competitive world and adapt to environments in which we

live which may be behavioural, cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal. (2001)¹ Life Skills can be defined in a general way as a mix of knowledge, behaviour, attitudes and values and a repertoire of skills and know-how to do something, or reach a goal. These key skills which are psycho-social in nature, through practice and training, develop into competencies and contribute to an overall successful life of an individual thereby a well-functioning society. In totality life skills are always considered as competencies that are positive in nature, that which promotes positive behaviour and that can be enhanced through practice. Life Skills are instrumental to meeting important challenges in a wide spectrum of relevant contexts including self, family and community. Therefore in a nutshell, Life Skills are the abilities that help to promote mental well being and competence in people as they face the realities of life.

The best ways Life Skills are imparted are through an interactive methodology, assisting individuals to develop and practise psycho-social skills that minimize risk factors and maximize protective factors. Therefore, Life Skills Education (LSE) is a basic learning need for all people. The main objective of Life Skill Education is to enable the learner to develop a concept of oneself through the interaction of self with society and enhance skills that can be translated into meaningful action to lead successful lives. The core skills are the most significant aspects of a learner's holistic growth and learning curve. As defined by World Health Organisation (WHO, 1998), Life Skills Education is designed to facilitate the practice and reinforcement of psychosocial skills in a culturally and developmentally appropriate way; it contributes to the promotion of personal and social development, the prevention of health and social problems, and the protection of human rights. (WHO)². The Inter-Agency Meeting on Life Skills Education which was held at WHO headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland on 6 and 7 April 1998, discussed the shared concerns and definition of the concept of life skills education. Many countries such as Zimbabwe, Thailand, Mexico, UK, USA & later India have in response to the need to reform traditional education systems, which appear to be outdated, adopted life skills education to suit the realities of modern social and economic life.

Approaches and Strategies for Effective Implementation of Life Skills Education

An approach means a general philosophy and a strategy is a careful plan or

1. Madhu Singh, (2003), "Paper commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2003/4, The Leap to Equality".

2. WHO, (1998), *Partners in Life Skills Education -Conclusions from a United Nations Inter-agency Meeting*

method for achieving a particular goal, usually over a long period of time.

Life Skills Approach refers to good interactive educational methodology which is not only information based, but combined with attitudinal and interpersonal skills known as ‘life skills’.³ The approach uses a wide variety of participatory and interactive techniques. It is a comprehensive, multi-strategy approach, aiming at effectively bringing about desired positive behaviours in individuals through the transfer of appropriate knowledge, skills, values and attitude in the learner. The goal of this approach is to promote healthy, sociable behaviour and to prevent or reduce risk behaviours, as well as make an impact on knowledge and attitudinal components.

Life skills education should not be looked as a subject but viewed as a process, fitting within the framework of the Four Pillars of Education, namely learning to know, to do, to live together and to be.⁴

- ◆ **Learning to know:** Developing reasoning- which refers to both the acquisition of knowledge as well as its use and also lays the foundations for learning throughout life.
- ◆ **Learning to be: Enhancing agency:** This focuses on the need for greater “self-knowledge” and includes self management skills to enhance one’s personality and work with greater autonomy, judgment and responsibility.
- ◆ **Learning to live together:** Enhancing social capital - Calls for exercising social skills, developing and understanding other people, appreciating interdependence, carrying on joint projects, living in a spirit of valuing pluralism, mutual understanding and peace.
- ◆ **Learning to do:** Enhancing one’s functioning’s and capabilities by practicing the skills that are innate or acquired such as the psycho motor skills/practical skills. The focus is on developing competencies and learning to transfer what is learnt into real life, be able to deal with different situations, rather than acquiring mere certificates for a job or occupation.

The Dakar Framework for Action⁵ states that all young people and adults have “the human right to benefit from an education that will meet their basic learning needs in the best and fullest sense of the term, an education that includes learning to know, to do, to live together and to be”, based on the

3. <http://www.unicef.org/teachers/teacher/lifeskil.htm>

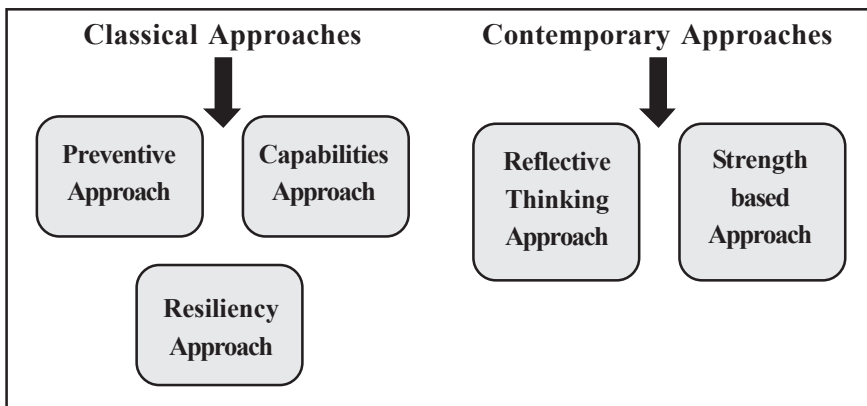
4. Delors, J. (1996): *Learning the Treasure Within, Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century*, UNESCO Publishing Press, Paris. *The Dakar Framework for Action*, (2000). *The World Education Forum, Dakar, France*

four pillars of education in the Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century (UNESCO, 1996). This report stresses the importance of enhancing inner capacities in order to meet the challenges of education. It offers a conceptual basis for a life skills approach to education that not only reinforces the definition of life skills as psychosocial abilities, but also proposes an education framework for the essential combination of psychosocial life skills (learning to know, to be and to live together) with practical, psychomotor skills (learning to do).

Life skills education differs in its objectives and contents from country to country and from one geographic locality to another. The three approaches, namely Capacity Building, Preventive and/or Resiliency approach, had been carried out in Zimbabwe, UK, USA and Mexico which was highlighted during the discussion at the Inter agency meeting held at Geneva in 1999. In India, nationwide network of life skills training providers (Governmental & Non-governmental organisations and/or educational institutions) have been doing their part in imparting life skills/life skills education to enhance a skilled Human Capital, many a times not being aware of the types of life skill approaches. A discussion on the same would help understand its importance. We can classify these approaches under two broad headings namely:

Fig. (i) Classical & Contemporary Approaches

(A) Classical Approaches & (B) Contemporary Approaches



The classical approach encompasses (i) The Preventive Approach (ii) The Competency Approach and (iii) The Resiliency Approach.

The contemporary approach encompasses (i) Reflective Thinking Approach and (ii) Strength Based Approach which focuses on well being aspect of individual.

(A) Classical Approach

1. PREVENTIVE APPROACH

Historical medical records as early as 2500 BC referred to the practice of prevention. References to the importance of prevention are found in the writings of Hippocrates, thus rendering the prevention concept important and certainly not new in the practice of medicine. World Health Organisation (WHO, 1998) has contributed immensely in the past twenty three years in Life Skills development from a health perspective and prevention model. The premise here is that major causes of diseases are preventable. Hence, various health promotion strategies had been employed in developing and developed countries to prevent HIV/AIDS, adolescent pregnancy, child abuse, substance abuse and violence prevention to name a few issues. This approach focused on imparting life skills as a methodology to prevent or lower the incidence of any undesirable behaviour, negative behaviour, and all that is related to ill health and poor mental well being. School drop –out and violence in schools also reduced considerably when life skills education was adopted in response to the traditional method of education. This helped to strengthen the use of life skills education to promote primary prevention and positive socialization.

Fig (ii), Table showing Levels of Prevention

Levels of Prevention	Phase of Disease	Target	Strategy
Primordial	Underlying conditions leading to exposure to causative factors	Total pollution and selected groups	Population Strategy: The aim of reducing average risk The high risk individual strategy: On people at high risk as a result of specific exposure
Primary	Specific casual and risk factors	Total pollution selected groups and healthy individuals	Primary Preventive Approaches: Individual, Environmental, Family Approach
Secondary & Tertiary	Early stage of disease Late stage of disease (Treatment, rehabilitation)	Patients	

Areas of primary prevention for which life skills are considered essential include: adolescent pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, violence, child abuse, suicide, problems related to the use of alcohol, tobacco and other psychoactive substances, injuries, accidents, racism, conflict, environmental issues etc.⁶ Dis-

6. WHO, (1998), *Partners in Life Skills Education -Conclusions from a United Nations Inter-agency Meeting*.

ease prevention includes measures not only to prevent the occurrence of disease, such as risk factor reduction, but also to arrest its progress and reduce its consequences once established. LSE is used as a tool for “Primordial” and “primary prevention” levels and to a certain extent as a remedial tool for “secondary” and “tertiary” prevention along with other therapeutic strategies.

Primordial prevention is a fairly new classification under prevention and can be understood as all activities that prevent the penetration of risk factors into populations. In 1978, Strasser suggested that prevention of cardiovascular diseases should go beyond programmes encompassed under the idea of primary prevention. It was he, who coined the term “primordial prevention”. The basic idea is to intervene in order to stop the appearance of risk factors in the population. Primordial prevention can be stated as **prevention of risk factors themselves, beginning with change in social and environmental conditions** in which these factors are observed to develop. Primordial prevention consists of actions to minimize future hazards to health and hence inhibit the establishment factors (environmental, economic, social, behavioural, cultural) known to increase the risk of disease. It addresses broad health determinants rather than preventing personal exposure to risk factors, which is the goal of primary prevention. For example, prohibiting alcohol in certain countries or states as enforced by law, would represent primordial prevention, whereas a drive or campaign against drinking would be an example of primary prevention. The approach can focus on the whole population with the aim of reducing average risk (the population strategy) or on people at high risk as a result of specific exposure (the high-risk individual strategy). Primordial prevention therefore include encouragement of positive health behaviour, prevention of adopting risk behaviour, elimination of established risk behaviour and promotion of the concept of health as a social value.

Primary prevention seeks to prevent the onset of specific diseases through risk reduction by altering the behaviours or exposures that lead to disease. In the case of HIV/AIDS, the first case was reported in India in Tamil Nadu in 1986. The virus spread from the high-risk groups to the general population at a rapid pace. To counter this, LSE was used as a preventive approach to change the course of the epidemic in India. As a result, the Adolescent Education Programme which included growing up, HIV/AIDS, life skills and extra-curricular activities was introduced. The objective here was to disseminate the concept of life skills for behaviour change and sensitize them to reduce the risk of such disease and also to contain the spread of the

decease.

Some of the other examples are education about good nutrition, smoking cessation, prevention of psychoactive substance abuse, vaccination etc.² In the case of psycho active substance, preventing initiation of substance use or delaying the age at which use begins are the two important objectives when primary prevention approach is used. As highlighted in Fig (ii), on the Table showing Levels of Prevention, we can take a look at the various strategies under Primary Prevention.

(i) Individual Strategy: The individuals are strengthened with knowledge and skills. Knowledge is enhanced by providing information, awareness and consequences of the disease – eg. Substance use. The individual is imbued with skills such as life skills, skills to read, write, and arithmetic, as also vocational skills. The individuals practice these skills in safe environment and hence are able to use it in challenging situations.

(ii) Environmental Strategy: The highlights for this strategy are: Formation of Youth groups and engaging them with alternate activities; providing resources such as education and health facilities; strengthening attachments such as positive attachments with family, caring friends, good peer relations and adults; bonding with family such as strengthening parent-child communication and involving the **local community** such as churches and the community itself as a resource.

(iii) Family Strategy: As a preventive strategy, orphans or abandoned children are put into loving families who provide love and care.

Secondary Prevention includes procedures and interventions after an illness or after serious risk factors have already been diagnosed. **Tertiary prevention** is directed at those who already have symptomatic disease, in an attempt to prevent further deterioration, recurrent symptoms and subsequent events.

Botvin, G.J. et al. (2002), stated that Life Skills Training (LST) program is an effective primary prevention program for adolescent drug abuse that focuses on these factors as well as enhancing social and personal competence skills. Research findings from over two decades have been reviewed and demonstrate that, the LSE approach consistently produces positive behavioural effects on alcohol, tobacco and other drug use.

To sum up, primordial prevention deals with underlying conditions leading to exposure to causative factors. Primary prevention aims to prevent disease from developing in the first place and secondary prevention aims to detect

and treat disease that has not yet become indicative. The goal is to arrest or slow the progress of disease, if possible in its earliest stages. Preventive approach is largely seen with the health perspective. Health promotion fosters physical, psychological, and social development by providing information, education for health and enhancing life skills in the individual. This helps individuals exercise their options, have more control over their own health and make informed choices conducive to health and well being.

1. CAPABILITIES APPROACH/COMPETENCY BUILDING APPROACH

The Capability Approach, proposed by Amartya Sen, views human development as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy, expressed as their capabilities in doing so (Sen, 1999)⁸. Sen. A. treats ‘the freedom of individuals as the basic building blocks’ of the development process. Education per se can be seen as a vehicle to ultimately enhance and attain individual freedom. However, this education must be of such quality that it meets the learning needs of all, one that is accessible and equitable. Quality education must possess appropriate content, processes, and contexts that lead to building capability of the individual.

In India, education must aim at developing and enhancing capabilities of individuals. Education needs to address not only the human resource needs of the society, but also the psycho-social development needs, aspirations of the individuals, their ability to think and reason, be self-managed, build self-respect, as well as respect others, think ahead and plan their future. The aim must be to “to achieve valuable human functioning”, which can be possible by integrating life skills education into the education system.

In countries such as Africa, Columbia and much later in the recent past in India, an important stimulus for life skills education apart from primary prevention was to reach out to the normal population and promote the positive socialization of children. The approach was to enhance competencies of young people not only in health and academics, but to face the challenges positively by focusing on life goals. This came to be labeled as the Capabilities Approach or Competency Building Approach.

The **Dakar Framework for Action-UNESCO** (April, 2000), specifically included the acquisition of “life skills” in two of its six Education for All (EFA) goals. The Framework stresses the need for not only psychomotor or practical skills, but also those psychosocial abilities – life skills - that will

8. A.K. (1999), *Development as freedom*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

enable to learn and use knowledge, to develop reasoning and analytical strengths, to manage emotions and to live with and relate to others. Therefore, successful education programs should not only look at healthy and well nourished students, but those who are motivated and are interested to learn.

The report of UNESCO Inter agency Working Group on Life Skills in EFA (Education For All), Paris, March 2004, discusses the links between life skills in EFA and Sustainable Human Development. It had laid out a theoretical framework based on the capabilities approach defined by Amartya Sen, putting forward the argument that for quality education to fulfill its role as a basis for sustainable human development, it needs to impart both manual skills as well as psycho-social abilities that help people think, feel, act and interact as individuals and as participating members of society - thus building individual capabilities in present and future generations.

At the World Conference on Education for All held at Jomtien in 1990, the international society raised concerns about the relevance of education and particularly for the need to focus on appropriate life skills for all learners from all parts of the world. The focus was to move away from the traditional education system and ensure equitable access to appropriate and high quality learning and life skills-based education which can be applied to various learning areas or domains. What was required was specific skills which are holistic to keep up to the fast changing times, which is content-specific as well, rather than a generic inventory of skills which had no purpose. Hence it was clear that the spotlight shifted to an education approach that enabled the learner to learn life skills that are relevant to specific contexts and time frames.

The Inter-Agency Working Group on Life Skills in EFA which was divided into six panels, considered some of the central issues within a life skills approach to education, discussed the underlying principles of life skills-based education keeping in mind national and regional experiences, assessment of and monitoring the outcomes of a life skills approach to education. The life skills approach strengthens the ability of an individual to evolve along with the needs and changing demands of the labour market. The Dakar Framework for action specifically calls for the need of “well-trained teachers and active learning techniques” in order to impart quality education. This helped give life skills education an impetus in India and was considered an essential component in the education realm.

The aim of the Capabilities approach is to enhance the skills (life skills,

employability skills, vocational skills etc) and capacities in the individual, to be able to face challenges and steer one's life successfully. Life Skills Education focuses on Building Personal Capacity, Building Inter-personal Capacity and Building Professional Capacity. Enhancing these capacities and developing them into skills and competencies is done either by (a) organizing “stand alone life skills programs”, (b) integrating life skills into the curriculum or (c) a blended program.

(a) Stand alone life skills programs

Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD), an Institute of National Importance, under the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India, is an apex institute whose mandate is empowering the youth of the country. Strategies adopted are: (a) Life Skills programs directly to target groups/ beneficiaries. (b) Training of Trainers Model (ToT) where a minimum of 5 to 7 days life skills training is imparted to master trainers all over India, who then train the next level trainers and then train the ultimate target groups/beneficiaries in a ‘cascading training model’. With such a model, a pool of quality resource persons specialized in Life Skills throughout the country may be formed.

RGNIYD is also the first University of its kind in India, to introduce a two year master degree course in Life Skills Education, since 2008. The goal is to harness the potentials of adolescents and youth, building human and social capacity & nurturing the individual's knowledge, skills and ability to deal with a rapidly changing world.

(b) Integrating life skills into the curriculum

Some of the players who have taken the concept of life skills education by integrating it in the curriculum are discussed. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), an Autonomous body under Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt of India, New Delhi, has been working towards evolving a teaching-learning process that is participatory, provide an environment which would empower the learners who become global leaders in the emerging knowledge society. As stated in the CBSE- hand book, “the board has incorporated a curriculum in which creativity, innovativeness and development of the whole being mark the growth of learners in addition to learning in the cognitive domain”. Teaching Life Skills, Attitudes and Values, as also Health and Physical Education are the components that add up to co-scholastic aspects of a student's personality. The Board commits itself to providing a stress-free learning environment that will develop competent, confident and enterprising citizens who will promote harmony and peace.

The Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) system assess the learner on a five-point grading scale, using tools such as checklists, observations, anecdotal records and portfolios. Assessment is done basically on three parameters with the help of indicators of assessment and checklists:

- Participation
- Interest
- Motivation.

A peer training approach is also followed which involves one teacher and 3-4 student representatives from each school (forming the core life skills team) at the school. They learn life skills through active learning and participation in a 6 session inter school training workshop programme. They further train their peers at school in these skills through the same process. They follow up with the main resource team for feedback, discussions, training material etc. The CBSE has a set of guidelines published to help teachers in imparting life skill education which is clearly explained in the teacher's manual which is age appropriate. Adequate teacher support materials and extensive teacher training particularly in the areas of pedagogy and assessment are provided.

The University of Madras has been a pioneer in carrying out research projects in the area of life skills since 1995. Some research projects such as “Enhancing the Personal, Social and Academic Performance of High School students through Life Skills Training” (1998); Life Skills Training for Promotion of Health among Adolescents” funded by TANSAC during the year 2008 and “Life Skills Training for the students of Corporation Schools” sponsored by Corporation of Chennai during the year 2009 are noteworthy. The Head of The Department of Psychology, Dr. S. Karunanidhi, has been instrumental in creating a research base in the field of life skills. The University of Madras had introduced with effect from 2007, Courses on Soft Skills (comprising of Language and Communication Skills, Spoken and Presentation Skills, Personality Enrichment and Computing Skills), each course having a credit point of three, under the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) for affiliated non-autonomous colleges. The objective was to enhance the employability of the students, improve communication skills and enrich student personality. The courses intended to bridge the gap between the skill requirements of the employer or industry and the competency of the students. However some colleges included a component of life skills in the course on soft skills, but though not scientifically.

The article titled “IIT-Madras students get game for life”, in Times of India, July 13, 2013 Chennai edition, highlights that the Indian Institute of Technol-

ogy-Madras (IIT –M), resorts to life skills course. It is a two-credit (30 hours) course is participatory & project-based and mandatory for all its freshers which started in 2013. The institute wanted its students to enhance their social and emotional quotient apart from their IQ. The Dean of the institute L.S. Ganesh stated that the course was expected to help students develop affirmative thinking, deal with success and failure, relationships, regional and gender diversity, alternate sexual orientation, health and hygiene, substance abuse, time management, decision making, communication and social responsibility. At the end of the semester, the students are evaluated on these skills using psychometric assessments and other tools.

Kristu Jayanti College, affiliated to Bangalore University, had started a Centre for Life Skills Education (CLSE) in association with Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD), Sriperumbudur in 2012, with an objective of training the faculty members of the College to be the resource persons for Life Skills Education (LSE). The college has taken a remarkable effort to offer students life skills training at the very beginning of the academic year since 2013.

The Madras School of Social Work (MSSW), Chennai has a paper on Life Skills for its M.Sc.in Counselling Psychology which is a two year Full-Time Choice Based Semester Programme and is offered to graduate students.

The Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), in its short term programme, Diploma in Youth Development & Social Change, has added life skills education in its curriculum, which is based on the principles of lifelong learning to youth.

Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences (AIPS) with an aim to develop self as a core competency that will enable individuals in their personal and professional growth, conducts behavioural science courses in UG and PG Programmes across the Amity University, where the modules deal with life skills.

University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram has introduced life skills for the Graduate level course in Sociology and B.Ed.

Viviekanada Subharthy University, Meerut has introduced MA programme in Life Skills Education and Certificate and Diploma programmes also.

Understanding the importance and relevance of life skills/ life skills education, Universities and Institutes have and others are in the process of introducing life skills education into its curriculum. Here, the approach is on ‘com-

petency building’ to prepare a skilled work force for the future.

(c) Blended program

The ideal example of a blended program is the Adolescence Education Programme (AEP)⁹, launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD in collaboration with National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), Government of India in 2005. In the case of a blended programme, the concept of life skills education is interweaved into the curriculum as also provided as a co-curricular activity.

There was a growing call to address the needs and concerns of adolescents in the country. Some of concerns/ issues required immediate intervention due to the fast growing incidence of smoking, drinking, tobacco use and other substance abuse among the adolescents. Particularly, adolescent girls continued to be the victims of gender-based discrimination, violence, abduction, trafficking, and domestic violence. It was universally accepted that the health needs, and particularly the reproductive and sexual health (ARSH) needs of adolescents, continued to be ignored and neglected, which was a matter of grave concern. The Adolescence Education Programme was, therefore, launched as an **umbrella programme to cover all the secondary and senior secondary schools, rural, urban and transitional across the country. AEP provides for life skills development focused through i) co-curricular activities in schools; and ii) curricular integration in school curriculum**

The **objective of the AEP** was to integrate and provide accurate age appropriate life skills based adolescence education in a sustained manner in all schools. It also aimed at a structured education to enhance knowledge and skills of adolescents to deal with challenges of life. The methodology adapted for AEP was interactive, participatory and based on life-skills. AEP enables young person’s to be equipped with accurate information, knowledge and skills in the content areas of the process of growing up, prevention of HIV/AIDS and prevention of substance abuse.

For successfully reaching out to all the adolescents of the country, the AEP adopted the following strategies:

(i) Advocacy: To create awareness and appreciate the need for supporting implementation of AEP. Advocacy programs to various important target groups such as policy makers, opinion leaders/legislators, religious/commu-

9. Adolescent Education Program, Life Skill Development, Facilitator’s Guide, (2005) NACO

nity leaders, educational administrators, media persons, principals/heads of schools, curriculum framers and teachers were carried out.

(ii) Life Skills based Co-Curricular Activities: Life skills based Adolescence Education was implemented in schools adopting a co-curricular approach. The activities aimed at holistic development of adolescents with positive attitude and the necessary life skills for life.

(iii) Integration in the School Curriculum: Appropriate content specific, culture specific and age appropriate life skills are integrated in curriculum.

(iv) Training: The CBSE provides trainings at three- levels – (a) Master Trainers Training Programme (MTT), for the resource persons; (b) Nodal Teacher Training (NTT) for teachers & (c) Advocacy Training Programme for the principals. The main aim of the training was to empower principals and teachers so that they can sensitize and conduct co-curricular activities in schools. The focus of these co-curricular activities is on Life Skills Development in the context of adolescent concerns, so that adolescents can cope up with the realities of life and can make responsible decisions. Almost all the institutions engaged in school education, teacher education, adult literacy programmes, innovative education schemes at national, state and district levels were involved in implementation of this Program.

- ◆ AEP is implemented by States and Union Territories through SCERTs and State Boards with support of State AIDS Control Society (SACS).
- ◆ NCERT is the coordinating agency of Adolescence Education Programme (AEP) supported by UNFPA and the same is being implemented by 6 national agencies: National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), Council of Boards of School Education (COBSE), National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), and Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS).

The program works on ‘cascade training model’ that has created a pool of ‘master trainers who orient nodal teachers’ who are entrusted with the responsibility of transacting life skills based education to secondary school students through interactive methodologies.

Another prominent player in the area of AEP is ‘UDAAN’. ‘Udaan’ is a Public-Private Partnership program between the Department of Human Resource Development (HRD), Government of Jharkhand, the Jharkhand State Aids Control Society (JSACS) and Centre for Development and Popu-

lation Activities (CEDPA) India, strengthening the Adolescence Education Program (AEP) in all government senior secondary schools in the state of Jharkhand. UDAAN aims to promote adolescent development and establish a cadre of healthy and empowered youth. CEDPA India provides technical assistance to integrate life skills-based adolescent education in the state secondary education system by strengthening teacher training, developing teaching curriculum and developing and operationalizing a monitoring system for the Jharkhand State Government.

To sum up, adolescence education is therefore primarily aimed at influencing the non-cognitive domain and developing life skills among the learners. The figure (iii) shows those institutes/ bodies who have adopted Life Skills ‘in-curriculum’ & ‘Plus curriculum’.

Fig iii, Life Skills program ‘in curriculum’ & ‘plus curriculum’

Life skills ‘in curriculum’	Life skills ‘plus curriculum’
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) ◆ National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) ◆ Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ CBSE, KVS, Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) ◆ Centre for Development and Population Activities (CDPA) with Govt. of Jharkhand ◆ NIMHAS Model, Bangalore - Life Skills education and School Mental Health programme

Though life skill education was being carried out throughout the world, in India, it failed to reach and propel education to its best. Many schools, colleges and universities have not seriously taken up life skills education as an approach for enhancing skills in the student community required to face challenges in life and for lifelong learning. There are universities and institutes that may have introduced life skills education either as a standalone training program, integrated into the curriculum or a program which blends the two. Here, the cited examples are limited to a few. There is scope for a detailed research on the universities and institutions that have adopted life skills education and the approaches adopted.

3. RESILIENCY APPROACH

The third type of approach is the Resiliency Approach. Resilience is about

helping individuals overcome personal vulnerabilities in difficult and trying circumstances and events. It is defined as a process, ability, or the outcome of successful adaptation to threatening conditions. The Resiliency Approach emphasizes to address the interplay of risk and protective factors faced by individuals, and strengthen personal as well as social & community factors.

Resilience and risk theory elaborates why some people respond better to stress and adversity than others. It is the individual's internal and external factors that protect him/her from social stressors, poverty, abuse, anxiety and the like. If a child has strong protective factors, he/ she can resist the unhealthy behaviours that often result from these stressors or risks. Due to extreme adversity, the individual's protective factors can weaken resulting in unhealthy behaviours. Internal protective factors include self-esteem and internal locus of control, while external factors are primarily social supports from family and community, such as positive role models or health services (Luthar and Zigler, 1991; Rutter, 1987). Life skills training with this approach tries to address these factors. Some of the risk factors related to individual characteristics are low intelligence, social competence, reading disabilities, poor work skills; emotional difficulties such as apathy, low self esteem, poor emotional coping skills; failure in school, poor scholastic performance etc. Protective factors that can be strengthened are cognitive skills, social competence, problem solving skills, internal locus of control, sense of purpose, motivation, self awareness and confidence building. The premise here is, by equipping individuals with life skills education/training, along with suitable psycho-social support systems, they would bounce back to normalcy at a faster rate than someone devoid of life skills.

Life skills education and /training addresses the following fostering healthy positive behaviour.

- ◆ Being in charge of our emotions
- ◆ Controlling impulses
- ◆ Analyzing the cause of problems
- ◆ Empathizing with others
- ◆ Believing in our competence
- ◆ Maintaining realistic optimism
- ◆ Reaching out to others and opportunities

Psycho-social Resilience Training Programmes:

The program targets five protective factors which are identified through a training need analysis and analyzed as mediating variables-

- ◆ Positive emotions
- ◆ Cognitive flexibility
- ◆ Life meaning
- ◆ Social support, and
- ◆ Active coping strategies

The concepts discussed are all within the framework of life skills though some resiliency training programs have clinical intervention that is complimentary to life skills training. The program aims to promote well-being by targeting the five protective factors as stated. The Resilience enhancement strategies used are Core Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT) and Cognitive Behavior Therapy.

ACT is a contextual approach challenging clients to accept their thoughts and feelings and still commit to change. ACT targets six core processes that are designed to build psychological flexibility. Psychological flexibility refers to an individual's ability to connect with the present moment fully, as a conscious human being, and to change or persist in behaviour that is in line with their identified values (Hayes, et al., 1999). The sessions involve psychoeducation, discussions, experiential exercises, and home assignments.

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) is a psychological treatment that was developed through scientific research. Research has shown that CBT is one of the most effective treatments for the management of anxiety. The therapy can be carried out either by a trained CBT therapist or CBT principles can be applied to self at home to manage one's own anxiety and conquer your fears. CBT involves learning new skills to manage symptoms. It teaches new ways of thinking and behaving that can help one get control over anxiety in the long-run.

(B) CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES

New methods and strategies have given rise to new approaches in evangelising life skills education.

1. Reflective Thinking Approach

Across the world, there has been ways of developing children's thinking and learning skills (Fisher 2005). Research has shown how the brain works and how people apply their minds to solving problems. The particular ways in which people apply their minds to solving problems are called thinking skills. A broad range of competencies are needed to prepare children for an un-

predictable future and developing ‘higher order’ thinking skills, in addition to other basic skills. The complexity of modern jobs requires people who can comprehend, judge and participate in generating new knowledge and processes. In the current employability scenario in India, studies indicated that the youth largely lack ‘higher order thinking skills apart from good communication skills and domain skills to name a few. Information is expanding at such a rate that individuals require transferable skills to enable them to address different problems in different contexts at different times throughout their lives. The challenge is to develop educational programmes that enable all individuals, to become effective thinkers as these competencies are essential.

A ‘thinking skills’ approach suggests that learners must develop awareness of themselves as thinkers and learners, practise strategies for effective thinking and to develop the habits of intelligent behaviour that are needed for lifelong learning. According to Goleman (1995), moving away from the simple model of looking at ‘thinking skills’ as isolated cognitive capacities, one has to view thinking as connected to emotions, dispositions including emotional intelligence. To teach cognitive skills & strategies and develop higher ‘metacognitive’ functions, learners must be ‘self aware’ (aware of themselves as thinkers) and how they process or create knowledge. An example is when ‘story –telling’ as a methodology is adopted to teach life skills to children. Here, the reflective thinking approach is being used. Through this approach’ life skills training and/or education can be carried out, provided the facilitator/teacher is well equipped with the strategies and methods to be followed.

2. Strength Based Approach

This approach moves away from the traditional ‘deficit’ philosophy towards a more holistic model of development. The approach enhances the positive developmental pathways of individuals. Rather than the traditional perspective of engaging a person with a problem orientation and risk focus, a strength-based approach seeks to understand and develop the strengths and capabilities that can transform the lives of people in positive ways (Alvord & Grados, 2005; Barton, 2005; Benson, Leffert, Scales, & Blyth, 1998).

Most problem solving approaches involve identifying what is wrong, analysing the causes, deciding on goals to fix causes and evaluating whether or not the problem was fixed. The strength based approach goes on the proposition that individuals can take control of their own lives in meaningful and sustain-

able ways. The focus here is on

- ◆ Building trust and workable relationships
- ◆ Empowering people to take a lead in their own care process
- ◆ Working in collaborative ways on mutually agreed upon goals
- ◆ Drawing upon personal resources of motivation and hope
- ◆ Create sustainable change through learning and experiential growth

A strengths approach is a specific method of working with and resolving problems experienced by the person. It does not attempt to ignore the problems and difficulties but, it attempts to identify the positive basis of the person's resources and strengths that will lay the basis to address the challenges resulting from problems. This approach can be used when intervention needs to be done for a whole community and all have to converge and work in collaborative ways to address issues. Imparting life skills through this approach can reap huge positive benefits in a school community where the teacher/ facilitator provides an opportunity to the individual to participate, take control and learn.

Conclusion

Over two decades, the concept of life skills and life skills education has permeated into the minds, heart and soul of children, youth and adults through various programmes and initiatives undertaken by government and non-governmental agencies. In India, the process of socialising individuals on life skills' is slow but steady. Though the concept of life skills is been defined by World Health Organisation, United Nations Children Fund, other UN agencies and researchers in this field, the concept is at times diluted in its definition and interpretation. Important in its conception are the personal, interpersonal and cognitive psycho-social skills that enable people to interact appropriately, manage their own emotional states and make decisions and choices for an active, safe and productive life.

Life Skills Education (LSE) as an approach must be developmental rather than imposing. It must help individuals to reflect first and then direct them towards reaching life goals. The importance of life skills has become imperative, and there is a need to interweave life skills education into existing curriculum and also develop well structured life skills programmes to cater to the needs of both in-school and out-of school children, adolescents and youth of the country to enhance their competencies. The various approaches cited is a guide to follow based on the issues dealt with and situation.

In order to create a generation that is skilled, resourceful and purposeful, it is imperative that the ambassadors/ practitioners of life skills to continue their passionate ways in disseminating the concept of life skills to the larger society.

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Skilling India: Initiatives and Outcomes

Authors: Dr. V. Mohankumar & B. Sanjay
Publisher: Indian Adult Education
Association, New Delhi

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Pages: 201

Price: ₹ 300

India is expected to generate 500 million skilled work forces by 2022, for which a well planned strategy with political commitment is necessary. In this context the book titled **Skilling India: Initiatives and Outcomes** under review is quite relevant. The book is written by Dr. V. Mohankumar and Shri. B. Sanjay. Dr. Mohankumar has a track record of 25 years in the field of Adult Education in India. Mr. Sanjay is working with Indian Adult Education Association (IAEA) New Delhi for the last few years.

The Book is divided into 8 chapters with focus on vocational education in formal and non-formal education sectors. The 1st chapter starts with need for vocational education and the last chapter ends with “Make in India Campaign”. Important abbreviations are given in the beginning of the book for reference and better understanding of the concepts used in the text, in alphabetical order. Chapter I deals with need and relevance of vocational education. Concepts and meaning of vocational education is clarified. It is followed by major focus of vocational education, in five year plans starting from 1st five year plan (1951-56) to 12th 5 year plan (2012-17).

Chapter II deals with vocational education in India through various commissions and committees. Starting from Mahatma Gandhi it goes through University Education Commission, Secondary Education Commission, Kothari Commission and National Education Policy (1969), Kulandaswamy Committee Report, New National Policy of Education (1986) as updated in 1992, priorities and guiding principles are also analysed in detail. Major vocational education program, programs for special groups and out of school population is also explained. Emphasis accorded during 8th 5 year plan is also highlighted. The chapter ends with a brief conclusion.

Chapter III deals with further clarification of vocational education with details of opportunities for vocational education in India. The emphasis given for XI & XII five plan periods is also explained.

Institutional frame work for vocational education and training are explained in Chapter IV. The function and programs of Industrial Training Institute (ITIs) Industrial Training Centers (ITCs) are narrated with the roles

played by Central and State governments. Problems related to quality improvement, structure of programs are also given in a ‘note’ form, with details of roles played by polytechnics in vocational education and training in India. Community Polytechnics, and community colleges established by IGNOU are also included in this chapter. This chapter ends with the evolution Jan Shikshan Sansthan in the country, which explains the basic roles, functions and programs.

Role of vocational education in harnessing outsourcing opportunities is discussed in Chapter V. Outsourcing and its impact on Indian Economy is explained with statistics in this chapter. Vocational education available in India are classified under different heads like a) Agriculture area of vocation, b) Business and communication area of vocation, c) Engineering and Technology area of vocation, d) Health and Paramedical, e) Home science area of vocation and f) Humanities Science and Education area of vocation.

Chapter VI discusses the origin and development of Jan Shikshan Sansthan (The Institute of People’s Education) with its roots in Shramik Vidhya Peeths.

National Vocational Education Qualifications Framework (NVEQF) and National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) are discussed in Chapter VII. Time line of the implementation of NVEQF in Secondary education is given with detailed chart for easy understanding. Implementation Strategy, operationalisation, design of NVEQF, level descriptions for NVEQF etc are also briefed in this chapter.

“Make in India Campaign” is discussed in detail in Chapter VIII with focus on skill development. Aims and objectives with achievable targets for the campaign, manufacturing sector in India, Performance challenge and strength, contributions of manufacturing section to employment in India, etc. are given with details. Relevant details are included in the form of graphs/charts for better and clear understanding.

In brief the book gives a clear picture of vocational education in India with programs, activities and outcomes after independence. It can be used as a reference book for schools, colleges and all training institutions engaged in skill training.

Reviewed by:

Dr.V. Reghu

Former Director, CACE, University of Kerala &

Former Faculty Head, RGNIYD, Sriperumbudur

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The Janani Sisu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK) addresses the difficulties being faced by the pregnant women on account of high out of pocket expenses incurred by them on delivery and treatment of sicknew- born. The scheme has been able to provide completely free and cashless services to pregnant women including normal deliveries and caesarean operations and sick new born in Government Health Institutions in both rural & urban areas providing a) Free and cashless delivery; b) Free C-Section; c) Free drugs and consumables; d) Free diagnostics; e) Free diet during stay in the health institutions; f) Free provision of blood; g) Exemption from user charges; h) Free transport from home to health institutions; i) Free transport between facilities in case of referral; j) Free drop back from Institutions to home after 48 hrs stay.



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